MRS. FITZHERBERT AND GEORGE IV

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Mrs Fitzherbert
from the painting by Thomas Gainsborough
permission of Mr A G Sanderson

MRS. FITZHERBERT

AND

GEORGE IV

BY

W. H. WILKINS, M.A., F.S.A.

AUTHOR OF

"THE LOVE OF AN UNCROWNED QUEEN"

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

SECOND IMPRESSION

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TO

THE LADY CONSTANCE LESLIE

YOUNGEST DAUGHTER

OF

MRS. FITZHERBERT'S ADOPTED DAUGHTER

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED

PREFACE

The marriage of Mrs. Fitzherbert and George, Prince of Wales, afterwards George IV., is one of the romances of the later Georgian era. The extraordinary secrecy that surrounded the marriage, the fact that it was twice denied in the House of Commons, the persistence of the rumour that asserted its existence, the religious and constitutional questions involved by the secret marriage of the heir-apparent to the Throne with a Roman Catholic lady of good, but not of royal, birth, combine to make it one of the most interesting events in the history of the House of Hanover.

Though references to Mrs. Fitzherbert, more or less correct, and more or less detailed, may be found in many letters, memoirs, and diaries of the period, there is a great lack of definite information concerning herself and her marriage with the Prince of Wales. Her personality was a very elusive one, and her dislike to publicity deepened the mystery which surrounded her throughout her long life. Yet it was her intention that her authorised biography should one day be written, and the truth of her marriage be told. To that end, in 1833,

to be published, has given rise to many false and improbable stories concerning their contents.

Some three or four years ago, certain members of Mrs. Fitzherbert's family placed sundry papers in my hands for the purpose of writing her biography in a fuller and more connected manner than the memoir of Mr. Langdale. It was felt that the time had arrived for carrying out Mrs. Fitzherbert's wishes, and completing the task which Lord Stourton had failed to accomplish, and Mr. Langdale had only partly achieved. The distance of time, and the fact that all the characters in the drama were long since dead, was thought to form a sufficient guarantee that no susceptibilities could be wounded by reviving the subject. The events of which I was to write—of which I have written—took place nearly a century ago, some of them more than a century; a whole generation, nearly two generations, had passed away, and neither George IV. nor Mrs. Fitzherbert left any descendants. The story of their marriage was therefore considered to have passed into the domain of history, and become a subject for legitimate historical research.

Notwithstanding the difficulty, due, for the most part, to the scanty material at my disposal, I accepted the task, for the subject has always interested me, and the Hanoverian period is one I have been working at for the last ten years.

As I proceeded with the work, the difficulties grew less, for I received the kindest encouragement and assistance from the descendants of many of Mrs. Fitzherbert's relatives and friends, who placed letters and pictures at my disposal and gave me all information in their power. But I felt from the first that no biography of Mrs. Fitzherbert would be worth the writing which did not prove beyond all doubt the fact of her marriage with George, Prince of Wales. I felt that the marriage could never be proved without reference to the papers which Mrs. Fitzherbert had placed at Coutts's Bank in 1833 for that express purpose. These papers were still in existence, and, acting with the approval of the representatives of Mrs. Fitzherbert's family and friends, I made an application to His Majesty to see them, at the same time submitting the peculiar circumstances of the case. His Majesty was graciously pleased to grant my request, and I have been allowed to inspect the papers, and to publish in this book such of them, or such extracts from them, as seemed necessary for my purpose.

Without these documents it would have been impossible to vindicate completely Mrs. Fitzherbert's character. To His Majesty's generous permission is therefore due the fact that the honour and virtue of this much misunderstood woman are now established beyond doubt, and her memory cleared

from every shadow or stain. By his chivalrous action in this matter, His Majesty has won, in especial degree, the loyal gratitude of those Roman Catholic families (and they are many) with whom Mrs. Fitzherbert was allied by birth or by marriage, and in a wider sense the gratitude of all honourable men and women. In her lifetime a great wrong was done to her; now, nearly seventy years after her death, that wrong has been set right.

I have called this book "Mrs. Fitzherbert and George IV." I have done so because it is impossible to write the life of Mrs. Fitzherbert without writing also of him with whom her life, for nearly half a century, was interwoven. The book is primarily a biography of Mrs. Fitzherbert ("Maria Fitzherbert, wife of George IV.," as the "Dictionary of National Biography" calls her); it is not a biography of George IV., except so far as his life, directly or indirectly, touches hers. But it touches hers so largely that I have felt justified in giving it the more comprehensive title. I shall not be thought to belittle the work of many excellent writers, when I say that a dispassionate life of George IV., based upon his letters and papers (of which there exist a good many unpublished), has yet to be written. These documents alone would reveal the true man, his wayward moods, his abilities which were considerable, his eccentricities which were many—all there is to praise and

all there is to blame in this prince, perhaps the most abused of English kings, and, like many another man, often abused unjustly.

I have now only to express my indebtedness to those who have kindly helped me with this book.

My humble thanks are first due to His Majesty the King for permitting me to see, and to quote from, the Fitzherbert papers, formerly at Messrs. Coutts's Bank, now in the private archives of Windsor Castle. His Majesty has also graciously allowed me to publish certain letters of the Duke of Kent, the Duke of York, and other members of the royal family to Mrs. Fitzherbert, which will be found in this book.

I have next to express my gratitude to Sir Walter Smythe, Bart., the present head of Mrs. Fitzherbert's family, without whose sanction this book would not have been written. I have also to thank Lady Smythe for the kind assistance she has rendered to me.

My thanks are especially due to Lady Blanche Haygarth and Lady Constance Leslie, the surviving daughters of the Hon. Mrs. George Dawson Damer (*née* Seymour), Mrs. Fitzherbert's adopted daughter. These ladies have given me the greatest help by the loan of letters and pictures, and in many other ways. I have thanked them in detail elsewhere, but I should like to express my acknowledgments here as well.

To Viscount Esher I owe a debt of gratitude for the *invaluable aid he rendered me with regard* to certain documents quoted in this book.

My thanks are due to Mr. Basil Fitzherbert, the present head of the Fitzherbert family, Mr. Charles Weld-Blundell, and to the late Mrs. William Langdale, daughter-in-law of the late Hon. Charles Langdale, cousin of Mrs. Fitzherbert, and author of her "Memoir." Messrs. Coutts also I thank for their courtesy.

I also wish to convey my grateful thanks to the following, who, in divers ways, specified elsewhere, have helped to make this book more complete, either by the loan of letters, pictures, or in other ways:—

His Grace the Duke of Rutland, K.G.; The Marquess of Zetland; The Earl of Albemarle; The Earl Manvers; The Dowager Countess Manvers; The Countess of Munster; The Earl of Munster; The Countess Fortescue; Viscount Halifax; The Lady Horatia Erskine; The Lady Catherine Milnes Gaskell; The Lady Dorothea Rycroft; The Hon. C. R. Spencer, M.P.; The Hon. Gerald Ponsonby; The Hon. Frederick Wallop; Major General Sir Arthur Ellis, K.C.V.O.; Colonel Kenyon-Slaney, M.P.; The Rev. Canon Johnson, V.G. (of St. John the Baptist's Church, Brighton, where Mrs. Fitzherbert is buried); Dr. Chepmell; The Rev. A. C. Lowth; The Rev.

M. Gavin, S.J.; Miss Mary Arthur; Mr. J. G. Bishop (the historian of the Brighton Pavilion); Mrs. Francis Blundell; Mr. W. B Boulton; Miss Selina Bridgeman; Mr. Joseph W. Brooks; Miss Dundas; Mr. S. M. Ellis; Miss Gurwood; Mr. John Haines; Mr. John Harrington; Miss Lang; Mr. William Saunders; Mr. Arthur G. Sanderson; Miss Thornhill; Miss Thorold; and Mr. Towner.

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CHAPTER I

BIRTH AND PARENTAGE

(1756—1775)

MARIA FITZHERBERT was born on July 26, 1756, in the latter part of the reign of George II. She was the eldest child of Walter Smythe, second son of Sir John Smythe, Baronet, of Eshe Hall, Durham, and of Acton Burnell Park, Shropshire, by his marriage with Mary, the daughter of John Errington of Red Rice, Andover, Hampshire.

The Smythes are an old Roman Catholic family, originally hailing from the north of England. Sir Edward Smythe, the first baronet, owed his baronetcy to Charles II., who conferred it upon him after the Restoration in recognition of the services he had rendered to the royal cause during the great rebellion. The civil war had seriously impoverished the family fortunes, but Sir Edward Smythe repaired them by marrying Mary, daughter and coheiress of Sir Richard Lee, Baronet, of Langley and

Acton Burnell. By this alliance the Shropshire estates came into possession of the Smythes, and Acton Burnell became, and has remained until this day, the principal seat of the family. The mansion is a handsome building of white stone, surrounded by a finely timbered deer park, and commanding a view of the distant Wrekin. Acton Burnell has historical associations. In the park are the ruins of an ancient castle, and near it are the remains of an immense tithe-barn. Here Edward I. held his parliament in 1283, when the celebrated statute of Acton Burnell was passed; the nobles assembled in the castle, and the Commons sat in the barn. In the old parish church hard by are many monuments of the Smythe family. There is a Roman Catholic chapel in the mansion originally built for a company of Benedictine monks who fled from France at the time of the Revolution, and were sheltered at Acton Burnell. One of the most interesting legends of Acton Burnell is that here was laid the scene of the introductory chapter of "John Inglesant." The place is steeped in the traditions of those who have held fast to the old faith.

Belonging to the great cousinhood of the old Roman Catholic families in England, the Smythes have allied themselves before and since Mrs. Fitzherbert's day with many illustrious houses of the same religion, such as the Arundells of Wardour, the Stourtons, the Staffords, the Stonors, the Jerninghams, the Cliffords, the Welds, the Blounts, the Fitzherberts, the Erringtons, the Herberts,

and many others too numerous to be mentioned here. The Smythes have always been distinguished for their fine sense of patriotism and loyalty. The family motto is *Regi semper fidelis*, and the beautiful daughter of their house, whose story will be told in this book, certainly acted upon it. None was more faithful to her king than she; none suffered more for that fidelity.

Mr. Walter Smythe, Mrs. Fitzherbert's father, was a younger son, and received only a younger son's portion of the family fortune. It was difficult for him to supplement it, for, in consequence of the penal laws then existing against Roman Catholics, every career, at that time considered suitable for a youth of his birth and breeding, was closed to him. His desire was to serve his country in the profession of arms, but he was ineligible for either the army or the navy. He therefore followed the example of many other young Englishmen, sons of Roman Catholic nobility and gentry, and accepted a commission in the Austrian army. There is a picture of him at Acton Burnell in an Austrian uniform of green and scarlet, a handsome, soldierly-looking man, with flashing eyes and the aquiline nose characteristic of his race.

Walter Smythe entered the service of the Emperor of Austria shortly before the Jacobite rising of 1745. It was perhaps well for him that he was out of England at that time for the Smythes, like all Roman Catholics, [illegible] in [illegible] sympathised with the cause of the Stuarts. [illegible] English Roman Catholics were [illegible]

in the rising, but when Charles Edward came south of the Border many of the younger Catholic nobility and gentry were ready to flock to his standard. Some did so and were involved in his ruin.

Walter Smythe did not come to back England until some years after the battle of Culloden had extinguished the hopes of the Stuarts. By then the great bulk of the English Roman Catholics had come to acquiesce hopelessly in the establishment of the Hanoverian dynasty, though for some the White Rose still retained its fragrance. Shortly after Walter Smythe's return he married, in 1755, Mary, daughter of Mr. John Errington, a cadet of the ancient Northumberland family of that name, with whom the Smythes of county Durham were remotely connected. Mary Errington had great beauty, and a moderate fortune—in those days a not inconsiderable dower. They were married (according to tradition, for there exists no record of the marriage) at Acton Burnell, where Walter's elder brother, Sir Edward Smythe, was then the reigning baronet. For the first few months of their married life they appear to have resided at Acton Burnell, and then they moved to Tong Castle, in the same county. Tong, an ancient castle dating back in legend to Saxon times, had passed into the possession of the last Duke of Kingston, who seldom resided there, and was then wishing to sell it. The Duke probably lent Tong to Walter Smythe for a time; it is possible that he appointed him, as a neighbour, to look after the management



WALTER [illegible]

Mrs. F[illegible]

In the [illegible]

(From a Painting at [illegible])

of the estate; it is certain that Smythe and his wife were residing at the castle in 1756. According to one authority, and agreeably also to family tradition, it was here that their eldest child, who in after years became celebrated as Mrs. Fitzherbert, was born, on July 26, 1756. It is impossible, however, to speak with certainty on this point; for there exists no public register of her birth owing to the fact that she was the child of Roman Catholic parents, and born previous to any measure of relief. Family registers were often kept (in Mrs. Fitzherbert's case even they were wanting), and wealthy parents used to have medals struck in commemoration of the birth of their children Neither does there exist any record of her baptism. The priests in charge of the chief Roman Catholic missions had private registers, but these were not kept in the chapels.[1] According to the genealogical chart of the Smythe family, the child was christened Mary Anne, and she is thus denominated in the family tree at Acton Burnell, but Mrs. Fitzherbert signed herself "Maria," and under that name she was always known.

The only written authority in support of Mrs. Fitzherbert having been born at Tong is to be found in a book on the castle[2] wherein the author says:—

[1] For instance, at the beginning of the baptismal register kept at the Roman Catholic Church of the Holy Apostles, Norwich, there is written on the fly leaf as follows "A Register of Baptisms copied from Mr. Angier's, beginning from September 1775, no one being kept before by reason of the penal laws"

[2] "A History of Tong and Boscobel," by George Griffiths, 1894

"Mr. H. F. Vaughan writes to me (November 17, 1884): Mrs. Fitzherbert, the wife of George IV., was born in the 'Red Room' at Tong Castle, having arrived somewhat unexpectedly during a visit of her parents at Tong, as I was informed by the late Madame Durant, with whose family my own was intimate." This Madame Durant, *née* Lafève, was the daughter-in-law of the George Durant who purchased Tong Castle from the Duke of Kingston in 1762,[1] so that the testimony is fairly direct. It would be in the fitness of things also if Mrs. Fitzherbert were born at Tong, for many famous women have been connected with the ancient castle, but none, it may be safely said, more celebrated than she. Tong is associated with Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, whose father, Evelyn, Duke of Kingston, owned it; with Venetia, Lady Digby, whose beauty formed the theme of Ben Jonson's "Eupheme," and with the witty and scandalous Elizabeth Chudleigh, Duchess of Kingston.

There exists, however, a local tradition to the effect that Mrs. Fitzherbert was not born at Tong Castle, but at a farmhouse in the neighbouring village of Shifnal. Mr. and Mrs. Smythe, so the legend runs, were residing at Tong Castle in 1756, but as the time drew near for the lady's first confinement, her husband determined to take her to

[1] Mr. George Durant "improved" the castle built by Sir Henry Vernon in 1500 on the site of an older one, by re-facing it with a mixed Moorish and Gothic exterior. The ownership of the Durants lasted nearly a century. In 1855 Tong Castle was sold to the Earl of Bradford.



TONG CASTLE, SHROPSHIRE

STATED TO BE MRS. FITZHERBERT'S BIRTHPLACE

London for the event They appear to have delayed their departure too long They started from Tong one fine morning in July, on their journey to London, and were driving in the family coach along the old posting road, when Mrs Smythe was suddenly taken ill As it was impossible to proceed on their journey, they took refuge in a farmhouse near by In this modest dwelling, a few hours later, on July 26 1756, Maria Fitzherbert was born[1] It is an old red brick house, known as Hatton Hill Farm, in the parish of Shifnal and is still standing It appears to have been re faced and to have had new windows put in but otherwise it looks much the same as it might have done a hundred and fifty years ago

Shortly after the birth of their eldest child, Mr and Mrs Smythe left Shropshire and bought an estate at Brambridge, near Winchester, which became their permanent home Their reason for settling in Hampshire was doubtless because Mr Errington, Mrs Smythe's brother, lived not far off, at Red Rice, in the same county The house at Brambridge was a comfortable, roomy mansion without any pretension, the sort of house that a country squire of moderate means might occupy It dated from Charles II 's reign, and was approached by a double avenue of limes[2] At Brambridge in

[1] I am indebted for [illegible] Slaney, M P, of H[illegible] by his great aunt [illegible] who died in 1863 at the age of ninety

[2] A fire in 1872 burnt the old house to the ground It has since been rebuilt the avenue of limes still stands

the succeeding years Mrs. Smythe gave birth to her other children, four sons and a daughter,[1] and some of their descendants lived there until a comparatively recent date. The Smythes were firmly attached to their religion, and one of their first acts at Brambridge was to fit up a room in a house in the village as a chapel, where a priest occasionally celebrated Mass. Later, when the Relief Acts made it possible, they established a Roman Catholic mission in the

[1] SHORT PEDIGREE OF MRS. FITZHERBERT.

Sir JOHN SMYTHE (3rd Bart.), *d.* 1737. = CONSTANTIA, dau. of George Blount, Esq., sister of Sir Edward Blount (4th Bart.).

Sir EDWARD SMYTHE (4th Bart.), *b.* 1719, *m.* (1) Maria, dau. of Peter Giffard, Esq. (2) Mary, dau. of Hugh, 4th Lord Clifford, *d.* 1784, having issue, from whom the present head of the family, Sir (John) Walter Smythe, 8th Bart., descends.	WALTER, *m.* Mary, dau. of John Errington, Esq., *d.* 1788.	CONSTANTIA, *m.* Marmaduke, 5th Baron Langdale, and had one daughter Mary, who married the 16th Lord Stourton.

Children of Walter Smythe:

Mary Anne or Maria, *b.* July 26, 1756, *m.* (1) 1775, Edward Weld, Esq. of Lulworth. (2) 1778, Thomas Fitzherbert, Esq. of Swynnerton. (3) Dec. 15, 1785, George, Prince of Wales (afterwards George IV.), *d.* Mar. 29, 1837.	WALTER, *b.* 1757, *m.* 1807, Louisa, dau. of Thomas Boycott, Esq., *d.* 1822, leaving two daus. (1) Louisa Mary, *m.* Sir Frederick Hervey Bathurst, Bart. (2) Charlotte Georgiana Harriett, *m.* the Hon. George Augustus Craven.	JOHN, *m.* widow of Captain Strickland. He had a daughter Marianne (afterwards adopted by Mrs. Fitzherbert), who married the Hon. Edward Stafford Jerningham, 2nd son of George Wiliam Lord Stafford.	CHARLES (of whom nothing is known).	HENRY (of whom nothing is known).	FRANCES, *m.* Sir Carnaby Haggerston, 5th Bart., *d.* 1836, having issue one daughter Mary, who married Sir Thomas Stanley, 9th Bart.

district,[1] and in after years their elder daughter, Mrs Fitzherbert, then a widow in affluent circumstances, endowed it.

There is very little to record of Maria Smythe's girlhood She grew up under the ban laid upon her religion. The Roman Catholic families of that day lived very much to themselves, they were regarded with dislike and suspicion by many of their neighbours, even those of education and equal birth, and were largely cut off from social intercourse Deprived of their civil rights, treated as aliens and suspects in the land of their birth, they were forced to practise their religion almost by stealth Their priests in England lived in fear, and the doors of the chapels were bolted before Mass began to keep out spies, for the Act of William and Mary, "An Act for the further prevention of the growth of Popery," was still unrepealed[2] Under these circumstances it is no wonder that many Roman Catholics left England, while those that remained and held fast to their faith became, to quote the words of a dispassionate writer, "virtually outlaws in their own country, doomed to a life of secrecy and retirement."[3] We may be pardoned for dwelling on this state of affairs, for Mrs. Fitzherbert's childhood and youth were passed before any measure of Roman Catholic relief was carried The in-

[1] The priest's house in the village has now been converted into a nurseryman's. In one of the rooms of the house may be seen traces of the chapel

[2] So late as 1767 (eleven years after Mrs. Fitzherbert's birth) a priest was convicted and condemned under its provisions.

[3] "A History of England in the Eighteenth Century," by W E Lecky

justice of the penal laws made a deep impression on her, and so far from weakening her in her religion (as it did many) only confirmed her in her attachment to it.

In accordance with the custom of many of the English Catholic families in the eighteenth century, Maria Smythe was sent to Paris to be educated at the English Convent in the Faubourg St. Antoine, kept by Conceptionist nuns, known as the "Blew Nuns." For half a century this convent was the best and most select school for the daughters of English Roman Catholics.

One anecdote only has come to us out of the obscurity of her girlhood in Paris. On one of her holidays she was taken by her parents to Versailles, where they saw Louis XV. dine in public. (People were admitted by ticket, and stood behind a barrier to watch the monarch dine alone in state.) During the repast the French king pulled a chicken to pieces with his fingers. This so amused the little English girl that, regardless of the rule that no one should break the silence, she burst into a peal of laughter. The breach of etiquette might have led to her summary ejection, but Louis XV. took it very good-naturedly, and sent the pretty fair-haired child a dish of sugar plums by one of his attendant nobles, the Duke of Soubise. In after years when Mrs. Fitzherbert was an honoured guest at the French court, the Duke, then an old man, reminded her of the incident, and told her he was the bearer of the gift.

In relating this incident in her old age to Lord Stourton, Mrs. Fitzherbert said "that



HATTON HILL FARM, SHIFNAL, SHROPSHIRE

Alleged to have been Mrs. Fitzherbert [illegible]

attentions from Royalty, as if to prognosticate her future destiny, commenced with her at a very early age." She added sadly that it was "rather a curious coincidence in her connection with Royalty that the last dregs of bitterness were presented to her from a Royal table connected with the French sovereign Louis XVIII."[1]

When her education with the "Blew Nuns" was completed, Maria Smythe returned to England. The influence of her education in Paris was very marked in her after life. She loved France, and often visited Paris, where she had many friends; she spoke and wrote French fluently, and there was something in her temperament—her impulsiveness, her vivacity and love of amusement—which was more akin to the French character than the English.

The next few years of Maria Smythe's life were passed in her father's home at Brambridge, broken only by visits to some of her relatives. No girl was brought up in greater ignorance of the world, or led a more secluded life, yet, before long, "the beautiful Miss Smythe" began to be talked about in the quiet Catholic world. She was then in the first blush of her loveliness. Her abundant hair, which she wore naturally, in defiance of the fashion of the day, was of a pale gold, her eyes hazel-brown, her complexion that of the wild rose

[1] "Memoirs of Mrs. Fitzherbert, with an account of her marriage with H.R.H. the Prince of Wales, afterward King George IV.," by the Hon. Charles Langdale. London, 1856.

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[1] "Memoirs of Mrs Fitzherbert, with an account of her [illegible] with H R H the Prince of Wales, afterward King George [illegible] Hon. Charles Langdale London, 1856

Mrs. Fitzherbert referred to the great *fête* at Carlton House [illegible] given by the Prince Regent to the exiled Royal F[illegible] of F[illegible] when no place was allotted her at the Royal table.

and hawthorn, her features exquisitely chiselled, her figure full of grace. Even more attractive than her beauty was her sunny disposition, her vivacity, her natural unaffected manner, which arose from absence of guile and kindness of heart, and an indefinable charm which clung to her through life.

CHAPTER II

LULWORTH AND SWYNNERTON

(1775—1784)

THE beautiful Miss Smythe was not long left without suitors In her eighteenth year, at her uncle's, Mr Errington's, house, Red Rice, near Andover, she met Mr Edward Weld of Lulworth Castle, Dorsetshire Mr Weld was a widower of forty four years of age his first wife, a daughter of Lord Petre, had died a few years before, leaving him without children He straightway fell in love with Miss Smythe, and made her an offer of marriage The master of Lulworth, head of one of the most ancient Roman Catholic families of England, and owner of many broad acres, was a great match for Maria Smythe, who had no dower but her beauty She accepted him without demur, or rather he was accepted for her by her parents, for in those days marriages were arranged much on the French system There is nothing to show that her duty and inclination did not go together, though her husband was twenty-six years older than herself and in delicate health They were married early in 1775, when she was eighteen, and took up their residence at Lulworth Castle.

Very little comes to us out of the past concerning Mrs Weld's brief reign at princely Lulworth, and

few are the traditions of her life there. In one of the rooms of the castle there is a curious picture showing Edward Weld and his two wives on one canvas. Mr. Weld had been painted with his first wife, Juliana, and after his second marriage, there being room on the left side of the picture, he caused his second wife, Maria, to be painted in the vacant space. There he stands between his two wives, a doubtful compliment, one would think, to number two. But Mr. Weld was fond and proud of his beautiful second wife; there is another picture of her at Lulworth painted immediately after her marriage, probably by Gainsborough. I am indebted to Mr. Charles Weld Blundell for the following account of it:—

"It is unfinished as to her marvellous aureole of hair, which she persisted in wearing *au naturel*, when all wore wigs and other hideous erections. She is *pétillante d'esprit*, and would convince the most incredulous of her early beauty and originality. I have heard it said by my great-uncle Weld[1] that, when being painted for this portrait, she was so indignant the first sitting at the artist's outline of her fuzzy head, filled in with grey impaste, that she jumped up saying, 'Why, the man has given me a grey wig,' and bounced out of the room, vowing that nothing would induce her to sit any more to him. There is no trace in it of the aquiline nose which she developed later."

Miss Mary Frampton, of Moreton, whose parents lived near Lulworth, writes in her journal of Mrs. Weld at that time: "She was then (1775) very

[1] Mr. Joseph Weld of Lulworth, who died 1863.



ACTON BURNELL PARK, SHROPSHIRE

THE SEAT OF SIR WALTER SMYTHE, BART

(Mrs Fitzherbert's ancestral home)

beautiful She dined at Moreton on the day she was nineteen—perfectly unaffected and unassuming in manner, as I heard from my mother at that time, and as I have myself since seen"[1]

Mrs Weld was not long at Lulworth, she lost her husband the first year of their marriage. Mr Edward Weld died in 1775 after a brief illness without having made special provision for his widow Many years later Mrs Weld (then Mrs Fitzherbert) told her adopted daughter, Mrs Dawson Damer,[2] that "she had always been a most unlucky woman" and as an illustration of the truth of her saying, she referred to the circumstances of the death of her first husband. He had drafted a will, she said, leaving her everything in his power He read it over to her in the library one morning, and was about to sign it and call witnesses, when she prevented him saying, "Oh, do that later It is such a lovely day, let us go for a ride." He yielded to her persuasion During the ride Mr Weld's horse stumbled and fell, bringing his rider down with him Under ordinary circumstances the accident would not have been serious, for Mr Weld was apparently uninjured But it proved such a shock to his enfeebled constitution, that it hastened his death On returning home he took to his bed, and never rallied He died a few weeks later, leaving his will unsigned As there were no children, he was succeeded in the estates by his only

[1] "The Journal of Mary Frampton," 1885

[2] Mary a daughter of Lord Hugh and Lady Horatia Seymour, who married the Hon. George Lionel Dawson Damer, second son of the first Earl of Portarlington

surviving brother, Mr. Thomas Weld,[1] who made provision for his brother's widow, but on a different basis to the bounteous one in the unsigned will. Mr. Thomas Weld was not at Lulworth at the time of his brother's death, and as means of communication were slow, the young widow was left in the house for some days absolutely alone. But she had kind neighbours. "My father and mother," writes Mary Frampton, "knowing that Mrs. Weld was so young and without any friends with her, sent to offer her to remove to Moreton, or to give her any comfort or assistance in their power. This friendly conduct was on her side always repaid with great civility and attention."[2]

Of the three years of Mrs. Weld's widowhood, very little is known. She left Lulworth almost immediately after her husband's funeral. There is a tradition at Brambridge that she at one-time lived in a cottage in the adjacent village of Colden Common.[3] It is possible that she went there in

[1] SHORT PEDIGREE OF THE WELD FAMILY.

Edward Weld (of Lulworth), *b.* 1731, *d.* 1775.
m. (1) 1763, Juliana, dau. of Robert Lord Petre.
(2) 1775, MARY ANNE, dau. of Walter Smythe, Esq.

|

Was succeeded by his brother Thomas Weld, *d.* 1810.

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Who was succeeded by his son Thomas (afterward Cardinal) Weld, *d.* 1837.

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Who was succeeded by his brother Joseph Weld, *d.* 1863.

|

Who was succeeded by his son Edward Joseph Weld, *d.* 1877.

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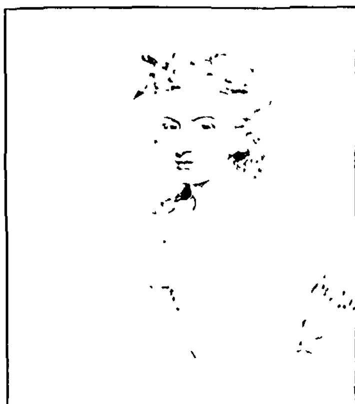
Who was succeeded by his son Reginald Joseph Weld, the present head of the family.

[2] Frampton, *op. cit.*

[3] Concerning this the Rev. P. H. Owen (sometime vicar of Colden Common) writes, 1903: "The cottage still exists. It is one of the old

but at this time she was not able to do much, and when she had the power it was too late, for the years of idleness had done their work. Their paternal uncle, Sir Edward Smythe, did little for them, and it was to Mr. Henry Errington, their maternal uncle, that they looked for help and guidance. Mr. Errington was a wealthy man, and he gave both with ungrudging hand. When Mr. Smythe was incapacitated by illness, Mr. Errington came to be regarded by all his sister's children (Mrs. Weld included) in the light of a guardian. He was generous and kind-hearted, a *bon viveur*, and a man of tolerant mind whose Catholicism sat lightly on him. But he was not, as events proved, a very wise one.

The young widow was too beautiful and attractive to remain long without offers of marriage. She refused several suitors, but in 1778, three years after the death of her first husband, she married Mr. Thomas Fitzherbert of Swynnerton in Staffordshire and of Norbury in Derbyshire. Her second marriage was no less advantageous in a worldly sense than her first had been ; it gave her the same position of dignity and continued her amid the same gracious surroundings as those she had enjoyed at Lulworth. Like the Welds, the Fitzherberts were Roman Catholics ; like them, they were an ancient and wealthy family, belonging to what has been termed the "untitled nobility of England." The Welds were of Saxon origin, the Fitzherberts descended from a Norman knight whose name appears on the roll of Battle Abbey. Mrs. Fitzherbert's second marriage was a happy one. There was not the same disparity of age between herself and her



MRS WELD

Afterwards Mrs Fitzherbert

(From a Miniature by Richard Cosway, R.A. *By permission of*
A. G. Sanderson, Esq.)

second husband as there had been in the case of her first marriage—Mr. Fitzherbert was only ten years her senior. But the second union, like the first, was unblessed with children. Mr. Weld had been something of a recluse; Mr. Fitzherbert was, for a Roman Catholic squire of those days, very much a man of the world. The Fitzherberts were very hospitable and popular and entertained largely at Swynnerton, their guests were chiefly of their own faith, though Mr. Fitzherbert lived on excellent terms with his Anglican neighbours. Mrs. Fitzherbert's younger sister, Frances, stayed at Swynnerton, and while there she became engaged to, and married, Sir Carnaby Haggerston, fifth baronet of that name, and head of an ancient Northumberland Catholic family. Lady Haggerston was almost as beautiful as her elder sister, but she lacked her social gifts and was of a quieter and less impulsive temperament.

The Fitzherberts also came to London every year. Their house in Park Street, Park Lane, was a meeting-place of many of the old Roman Catholic families, and Mr. Fitzherbert was active in keeping alive the *esprit de corps* among them. Yet he was one of the most liberal-minded of the influential Roman Catholic laymen, and he was one of the first to show openly his loyalty to the established dynasty. Though the rising in 1745 was still in the memory of many, a generation had grown up since the battle of Culloden. Charles Edward had sunk lower and lower in the estimation of his adherents, and was drinking himself to death on the continent. The House of Stuart had become the shadow of a shadow. It was now the second decade

of George III.'s reign, and Roman Catholics were taking heart at the kindness shown to them by the King, who, though a staunch upholder of the national Church, was averse from the persecution of his Roman Catholic subjects. An agitation, in which Mr. Fitzherbert was interested, was begun, for repealing the more obnoxious laws against them, and it bore fruit in the Roman Catholic Relief Act of 1778, which repealed the very severe Act of 1699, though it still left them under many disabilities. The measure of relief thus granted was small, and the motive which prompted the government to pass it was probably political expediency rather than a more liberal one, but this concession to justice, little though it was, excited the bigotry of the Presbyterians in Scotland, and the Protestant Dissenters in England (the Church of England held aloof), with the result that "No-Popery Riots" broke out in different parts of the kingdom. In 1780 these culminated in the disgraceful riots in London headed by the half crazy Lord George Gordon. For six days the metropolis was virtually at the mercy of a drunken and infuriated mob. Roman Catholic chapels were pillaged and burned, several mansions were wrecked, the gaols of Newgate and Clerkenwell were broken open and the prisoners set free, and Newgate was set on fire. Nearly five hundred persons were killed or wounded. The magistrates seemed paralysed, and had it not been for the determination of the King, who insisted on the military being called out, the whole of London might have been burned to the ground. The houses of the leading Roman Catholic laity were

fortified as though for a siege. Many of them worked hard to quell the tumult, and to help their priests to escape from the violence of the mob. No one was more active than Mr. Fitzherbert, who laboured untiringly, with results that proved fatal to himself. When order was at last restored he returned home much heated by his exertions. He bathed, and this his wife afterwards said was the beginning of the illness which caused his death. It brought on a violent chill which settled on his lungs, and defied all remedies. His wife nursed him with unremitting care, and when the winter came on she took him to the south of France, in the hope that the warmth and sunshine would help him to recover his strength. But all efforts were in vain. Mr. Fitzherbert died at Nice on May 7, 1781, at the early age of thirty-seven, nearly a year after the beginning of his illness Mrs. Fitzherbert found herself left a widow for the second time at the age of twenty-five. Thus she was early made familiar with sorrow.

Mr. Fitzherbert was succeeded in the family estates of Norbury and Swynnerton by his brother Mr. Basil Fitzherbert, from whom the present head of the family descends.[1] Mr. Thomas Fitzherbert

[1] A SHORT PEDIGREE OF THE FITZHERBERT FAMILY.

Thomas Fitzherbert (of Norbury and Swynnerton), *b.* 1746, *d.* 1781. *m.* 1778, MARY ANNE, dau of Walter Smythe, Esq, and widow of Edward Weld, Esq

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And was succeeded by his brother Basil Fitzherbert, *d.* 1797

|

Who was succeeded by his son Thomas Fitzherbert, *d.* 1857.

|

Who was succeeded by his brother John Fitzherbert, *d.* 1863.

|

Who was succeeded by his nephew Basil Thomas Fitzherbert, Esq., now of Swynnerton, the present head of the family, *b.* 1834, who

had left ample provision for his widow. He left her a jointure of nearly £2000 a year, the remainder of the lease of his town house in Park Street with all the furniture and appointments therein; his horses and carriages, "also the ponies or Galloways she usually drives in the phaeton"—in short, everything in his power.[1]

The two first years of Mrs. Fitzherbert's widowhood were passed in retirement. She remained at Nice some time after her husband's death, and erected a monument to his memory in one of the churches there. Then she went to Paris, where she had many friends. In Paris, Mrs. Fitzherbert, who was one of the most charitable of women, interested herself in an institution for the benefit of poor English Roman Catholic ladies who had taken refuge in France. This benevolence was afterwards distorted by her enemies into a charge that when she was in Paris she was engaged with certain French Jesuits in intriguing for "the promotion of popery in England." This falsehood may be taken as a measure of many of the untruths afterwards propagated concerning her.

In 1782 Mrs. Fitzherbert returned to England. We find a trace of her this year at Brighton.[2] Soon after her return she took on lease the beautiful villa

married Emily Charlotte, dau. of the Hon. Edward Stafford Jerningham and Mary Anne his wife (niece of Mrs. Fitzherbert).

[1] Mr. Fitzherbert's will was proved July 4, 1781, by Henry Errington (Mrs. Fitzherbert's uncle). From it these particulars are taken.

[2] In the supplementary Museum of the Royal Pavilion at Brighton there are four views of the Steine by a local artist, dated August 1, 1782, and dedicated to Mrs. Fitzherbert. This goes to show that she was well known at Brighton at that time.

of Marble Hill at Richmond, or, more properly, Twickenham. The house had been built by Mrs. Howard, afterwards Countess of Suffolk, the favourite of George II.: it was the famous villa of which Burlington and Pembroke designed the front, Bathurst and Pope planned the gardens, and Swift and Gay arranged the household. On Lady Suffolk's death it passed to her brother, and when he died it reverted to Miss Hotham, daughter of Sir Charles Hotham, who let it to Mrs. Fitzherbert. We may quote a description of the place as it was then from an old guide-book:—

"The house is most properly stiled Marble Hill; for such it resembles, in a fine green laun, open to the river, and adorned on each side by a beautiful grove of chesnut trees: the house is as white as snow, a small building without wings, but of a most pleasing appearance; the garden is very pleasant; there is an alley of flowering shrubs, which leads with an easy descent to a very fine grotto; there is also a smaller grotto, whence there is a fine view of Richmond Hill."[1]

Here Mrs. Fitzherbert lived quietly for a time, seeing only members of her family, and intimate friends. We find her in 1783 a young and lovely widow, and endowed with ample fortune, for £2000 a year in those days represented much more than it does now. Before long the rumour of her beauty spread abroad, her friends urged her to quit her seclusion, and at last she yielded to their advice

[1] "A Short Account of the Principal Seats and Gardens in and about Twickenham." Circa 1770.

and returned to London, to the house her husband had left her in Park Street. We find her soon the subject of newspaper paragraphs. The first mention of her is in the *Morning Herald*, March 20, 1784: "Mrs. *Fitzherbert* is arrived in London for the season."

In London she threw open her house to her friends and went into society. The many Roman Catholic families to whom she was allied, by birth or marriage, came to see her, and certain leaders of society called upon her, and made her welcome to their houses. Prominent among these was Lady Sefton,[1] one of the great ladies who for many years gave the *ton* to society in London. Lord and Lady Sefton, though not Roman Catholics, were connected with the Smythe family through the Erringtons. Lady Sefton showed the warmest sympathy and friendship towards her young kinswoman, and it was through her that Mrs. Fitzherbert became acquainted with other great ladies not of her religion, and on both sides of politics, such as the beautiful Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, the Duchess of Gordon, Lady Salisbury, Lady Cowper and others. This year marked her first appearance in what may be called general society, for during Mr. Fitzherbert's lifetime, she had moved almost exclusively among the Roman Catholic cousinhood. She was an immediate success. We find the following paragraph in the *Morning Herald*, July 27, 1784:—

"A new *Constellation* has lately made an appear-

1 Isabella, daughter of the second Earl of Harrington, and wife of the ninth Viscount and first Earl of Sefton.

MARBLE HILL FROM THE RIVER

(Where Mrs. [illegible]

ance in the *fashionable hemisphere*, that engages the attention of those whose hearts are susceptible to the power of beauty. The Widow of the late Mr. F—h—t has in her train half our young Nobility as the Lady has not, as yet, discovered a partiality for any of her admirers, they are all animated with hopes of success."

Mrs. Fitzherbert's beauty, her varied gifts, her means and good connections, all contributed to her social success. It was said that during this season in London she refused many excellent offers of marriage, including one from the young Duke of Bedford, who on her refusal never married, but remained in love with her until the day of his death[1] Probably she wished to enjoy her freedom, and did not desire to enter the matrimonial state again so soon. It is certain that she might have married a third time almost any one she would, and have occupied an assured position of rank and dignity had not evil destiny thrown her in the path of the Prince of Wales.

[1] Francis, fifth Duke of Bedford (1765–1802). This is open to doubt, for the Duke was then only in his twentieth year, and in after life he was said to be in love with Charlotte Princess Royal, eldest daughter of George III. The Duke, however, was always a great friend of Mrs Fitzherbert's, and he died unmarried.

CHAPTER III

PRINCE CHARMING

(1762—1784)

George, Prince of Wales, had barely come of age[1] when he first met Mrs. Fitzherbert, but he had already entered on that career of pleasure which marked his hot youth and his wild manhood. By his thousand extravagances, his racing, his gambling, his lavish hospitality, the "improvement" of his palace of Carlton House, and his reckless generosity to the fair sex, he was already piling up that burden of debt which was to embarrass him for the rest of his life.

By inclination as well as by position, he was the leader of fashion and gaiety in London, and society generally encouraged and applauded him in his extravagances. When the young Prince first "came upon the town," London was (after Paris) the gayest city in the world; and all society, men and women, old and young, were devoted to the pursuit of pleasure in its most showy and pronounced form. The spirit of robust enjoyment of the early Georgian era still flourished, but some of its grossness had worn off, and there had come a veneer, hardly to be called refinement, which seemed to have more in common with the Stuarts than with

[1] George IV. was born at St. James' Palace, August 12, 1762.

the House of Hanover. George III. and Queen Charlotte by their parsimonious court and strict lives had lost touch with society (in the restricted sense of the word, though they were popular with the middle classes), and could no longer restrain its excesses. They lived chiefly at Kew and Windsor, and except in name there was no longer a court in London. The advent, therefore, of a brilliant and handsome Prince, to whom the world seemed a garden of delight, was hailed with rapture. It was declared that for the first time since the death of Charles II. an English Prince was a gentleman and a wit. It was hoped that the day of German predilections and German manners was over. To London society, weary of the dulness and ugliness of the courts of the early Georgian Sovereigns, this young Prince, born on English soil, bred in England, and speaking English with "no Westphalian accent," as Horace Walpole calls it, came as a Prince Charming. There is no doubt that the Prince of Wales was charming; no Stuart Prince was ever more graceful than he, more generous, and one would fain hope more chivalrous. He was tall, and finely formed; he had a handsome and manly countenance; his leg—legs were much esteemed in the eighteenth century—was the envy of all the beaux; his smile the desire of all the belles; and his bow the most princely bow of any prince in Europe. His beauty was heightened by the picturesque dress of the period. He dressed with great richness and variety, as well he might, for it is said that his clothes, for one year, amounted to no less than £10,000. One of his early admirers,

who had every opportunity of judging, dwells o the "graces of his person, the irresistible sweet ness of his smile, the tenderness of his melodiou yet manly voice, the polish and fascinating ingenu ousness of his manners."[1]

The young Prince had the happy faculty o seeming to be intensely interested in the person t whom he was talking, whoever that person migh be, and he could talk well on almost any subject for he had considerable natural ability and many accomplishments. He could speak French, Italian, and German fluently; he was well-read in the classics; he was a fine musician; and he affected a taste for art and the *belles lettres*. His taste was not always correct, and tended overmuch to the showy and florid, yet, in comparison with that of his father, who had no taste at all, it was hailed as perfect. With all his luxurious habits he could not be called effeminate. He loved outdoor exercise, and showed to great advantage on horseback; he was a good shot, an accomplished fencer, skilful in the noble art of self-defence, and could on occasion use his fists with good effect. These things stood to his credit. On the other hand it must be admitted that he was not truthful. But the blame for that did not rest wholly with him. "You know I don't speak the truth," he said once, "and my brothers don't, the Queen having taught us early to equivocate." It is also true that he was reckless and dissipated, that the town was full of stories of his wild doings, that he gambled, and drank and swore, and he had already been engaged

[1] "Memoirs of Mary Robinson: 'Perdita,'" 1895.

in several affairs of gallantry. But these things did not make him unpopular; on the contrary, sad to relate, they rather added to his popularity. Most of the young men of fashion in those days (and many of the old men too) played for high stakes, drank more than was good for them, rapped out fearful oaths on the smallest provocation, and all too lightly regarded the marriage tie. One cannot make the young Prince responsible (as some would seem to do) for all the vices and follies of his day. In fact one cannot hold him altogether responsible for his own, when we look back on his loveless boyhood and unwise upbringing. His father was cold, stiff, and unsympathetic; he disliked his eldest son, treated him harshly, and openly insulted him before the courtiers. His mother alternately spoilt him and turned against him. His younger brother Frederick,[1] to whom he was devotedly attached, was taken away from him, when on the threshold of manhood, and sent to Hanover. He had no one to help or advise him, and it may be doubted whether there was one disinterested person, among all his so-called friends, who really cared for him. His impulses were good, he was affectionate and warm-hearted, generous and open-handed to a fault. We speak of him as he was in his early manhood; the time had not yet come when all the goo[illegible] him was turned to evil by bad companions, p[illegible] and flatterers, his very virtues tortured [illegible]s, and every noble instinct choked by the [illegible] gross passions. One could not say of

[1] [illegible] Bishop of Osnabruck, afterwards Duke of York, [illegible]II.

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[1] Frederick, Prince Bishop of Osnabruck, afterwards Duke of York second son of George III.

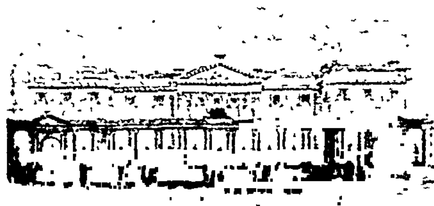
him even in his youth, that he was unspotted from the world, but one could say that he had more good in him than evil, and had his finer qualities been fostered and developed he would have grown up a wiser and a better man. His tutor, Bishop Hurd, was asked one day his opinion of his pupil, then a boy of fifteen years of age. "I can hardly tell," he replied; "he will be either the most polished gentleman or the most accomplished blackguard in Europe, possibly both."[1] The "possibly both" in years to come proved the true prediction.

The Prince of Wales had passed his boyhood shut up in a palace which was almost a prison, and deprived of rational amusements. His father's jealousy kept him back as much as possible, treating him as a child when he was a boy and as a boy when he was a man. So things went on until the Prince reached his nineteenth year, when, as he became legally of age as heir to the throne, the King could no longer keep him under lock and key, and was compelled to grant him a small establishment of his own and apartments in Buckingham House. For even this limited measure of freedom the Prince was all unprepared, and it is no wonder that his new-found liberty degenerated into license. He fell into bad company; he had an amour with the beautiful actress Perdita Robinson; he made friends with his uncle the Duke of Cumberland, who hated the King and Queen because of their refusal to receive his Duchess at court, and therefore did his best to prejudice the son against the father. He also became intimate with the Duke of Chartres, afterwards

[1] "Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Richard Hurd," 1860.



KEW PALACE WHERE GEORGE PRINCE OF WALES
WAS BORN



CARLTON HOUSE FACING PALL MALL

hall and a great staircase with a railing glittering with gold led to several magnificent saloons, such as the state apartments, the cupola room, the rose satin drawing-room, and the armoury, said to be one of the finest in Europe. The Prince's private apartments were on the ground floor, looking over the gardens which ran as far as Marlborough House, and in the summer were a mass of leaf and bloom.[1]

Emancipated from parental control, the first use the Prince made of his freedom was to identify himself more closely than before with the principles of the Whig Party. He made a speech in the House of Lords in which he declared—"I exist by the love, friendship, and benevolence of the people, and their cause I will never forsake as long as I live." He attended the debates in the House of Commons, and showed his sympathy with the Whigs by noisily applauding their speeches. The King and the Tories made a great outcry about this, but as George III. was a violent partisan on the other side, and was secretly plotting the overthrow of his own (Whig) Government, it was hardly for him to rebuke the conduct of the Prince of Wales on this head.

The Coalition Ministry came suddenly and ignominiously to an end in December 1783, and the Prince's friends went out of office. The Prince took an eager part in the general election that followed in May 1784, especially on behalf of his friend Fox, the "man of the people," who stood for Westminster. The story of the Westminster election

[1] Carlton House was pulled down in 1828 to make room for the central opening of Waterloo Place. Some of the Corinthian columns now help to form the portico of the National Gallery.

has been told too often to need re-telling here. The Prince turned Carlton House into a committee room for his friends, and the beautiful Duchess of Devonshire bought votes with her kisses. When Fox's name appeared at the head of the poll he was carried in procession to Carlton House in a chair wreathed with laurels and preceded by a banner inscribed "Sacred to Female Patriotism" The same night the Prince, arrayed in buff and blue, Fox's party colours, went to a supper party given by the fair and fascinating Mrs Crewe in honour of the event. Fox was there and the Duchess of Devonshire, and all were arrayed in the same colours The Prince gave the toast "True blue and Mrs Crewe," to which the lady with ready wit replied by proposing "True blue and all of you" The Prince also celebrated Fox's victory a few days later at Carlton House by giving a magnificent *fête* The young Prince showed to great advantage in his own house —no host ever did the honours more gracefully— and on this occasion the gentlemen, including the Prince himself, waited on the ladies at table before sitting down themselves. This *fête* was regarded by the Court as the climax of the Prince's insubordination No notice was taken of his birthday at Windsor, and the King ranked him among his enemies.

The Prince did not take this mark of parental displeasure very much to heart, and found distraction in new gaieties and entertainments. Of all the brilliant, pleasure-loving crowd who at this time surrounded the Prince, undoubtedl· the two persons who exercised the most i

over him were Fox and the Duchess of Devonshire.

Charles James Fox[1] was at this time about thirty-four years of age, and in the meridian of his fame and his great abilities. He had filled high offices under the Crown, and had been leader of the House of Commons and Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. He had made his magnificent oration on the American War, and was famous in both hemispheres. He had inherited from his ancestor, Charles II., not only his swarthy, saturnine appearance, but also his love of vicious pleasures, more especially for gambling and women. He was stout, heavily built, and unwieldy, negligent in his dress and slovenly in his personal appearance. But when he smiled, or when he spoke, his whole being seemed transformed, and he won to his side all whom he would. He was a good friend—eager, warm-hearted, unselfish. His personal creed was frankly epicurean; in religious matters he had no fixed belief. Yet in his political life he was a man of lofty ideals and high principles. Such was this remarkable man, the "my dear Charles" of so many of the young Prince's impassioned letters. The King strove in vain to break the friendship, and in an agony implored the Lord Chancellor, Thurlow, to tell him what he could do. "Sir," replied the surly Thurlow, "you will never have peace until you clap 'em both into the Tower."

[1] Charles James Fox (1749-1806), third son of Henry Fox, afterwards Lord Holland, and Lady Caroline Georgina, daughter of Charles Lennox, second Duke of Richmond, grandson of Charles II.

The Duchess of Devonshire,[1] who was devoted heart and soul to Fox, also exercised an influence over the Prince, an influence social rather than political, though there was no keener politician than she. The King and Queen disliked the Duchess almost as much as Fox, but they could not show their displeasure to her in the same way. When the beautiful Georgiana condescended to grace their dull drawing-rooms with her presence they were bound to receive her with politeness, for the young Duchess of Devonshire was a very great lady, not only by virtue of her rank, but by reason of her vivid and inspiring personality. Nearly all contemporary accounts describe her charms as beyond compare. She was tall and most divinely fair, with deep blue eyes, and hair of a reddish tinge. Wraxall, who knew her well, says that the secret of her charm lay deeper than her beauty. "It lay in the amenity and graces of her deportment, her irresistible manners, and the seductions of her society. . . . In addition to the external advantages she had received from nature and fortune she possessed an ardent temper, susceptible of deep as well as strong impressions; a cultivated understanding, illuminated *by a taste for poetry and the fine arts; much* sensibility, not exempt, perhaps, from vanity and coquetry."[2] The Duchess, in short, was a brilliant paradox. On one side she was beautiful, graceful and witty, kind-hearted and philanthropic, full of generous impulses and high ideals; yet on the other

[1] Georgiana (1757-1806), eldest daughter of the first Earl Spencer, married 1774 the fifth Duke of Devonshire.

[2] "Posthumous Memoirs of my own Time," by Sir Nathaniel Wraxall.

she was incredibly reckless and foolish, willing to risk everything on the hazard of the moment; of a restless energy ever seeking something new, panting for notoriety, swayed by desire, living always for the hour with no thought beyond, yet beyond all words lovable.

This peerless creature had been married at seventeen to a husband who soon grew indifferent to her, a *grand seigneur*, whose constitutional apathy formed his most distinguishing characteristic. The young Prince of Wales was much influenced by the Duchess, whom he declared, not without reason, to be "the best bred woman in England." He consulted her on all matters of fashion and taste. It was she who helped him to choose the furniture and decorations of Carlton House, and when he revived masquerades which had fallen into disfavour, it was with the Duchess that he opened the brilliant one at a club in St. James's Street. Devonshire House was the centre of Whiggism, and the Duchess was the Egeria of the party. The Prince of Wales was a constant frequenter of the parties at Devonshire House, which was then the resort not only of politicians but of all the wits and *beaux esprits* of the day.

Such was George, Prince of Wales, such his environment and his friends, when he thrust himself into the life of Mrs. Fitzherbert.

It is not possible to give the exact date when the Prince of Wales first saw Mrs. Fitzherbert, but we shall probably be not far wrong in assuming that it was some time during the year of his coming of age.

Romance and tradition have it that they first met on the banks of the Thames at Richmond in the spring of 1783, when she was living quietly at Richmond and he was staying at Kew. Neither knew who the other was, but the Prince fell at once in love with the fair *incognita*. In the excitement and bustle consequent on his coming of age (August 1783) he appears to have lost sight of her for the time being. Yet she had made a deep impression on him. We read of the Prince at a dinner party at Lord Lewisham's about the time he attained his majority. The Prince had drunk deep, and after dinner fell into a gloomy reverie. Presently in one of those confidences with which he often honoured his friends, he bewailed his sad lot, and said he envied the Dukes of Devonshire and Rutland, who had been free to marry beautiful and clever women whom they loved. For his part he supposed he should be forced to marry some "ugly German frow." Then he turned to Rigby, Master of the Rolls, and asked him what he would advise him to do. "Faith, sir," answered Rigby, "I am not yet drunk enough to give advice to the Prince of Wales about marrying." The conversation showed that there was something on the Prince's mind, and before long that something was revealed.

According to another account the Prince first saw Mrs. Fitzherbert in Lady Sefton's box at the Opera, and was so struck with her unusual beauty that he had her followed home. The two accounts are not necessarily irreconcilable if we read the second to mean that it was the first time he saw her in London. This occasion must have been early in 1784.

Mrs. Fitzherbert had come to London in March, and there is nothing more probable than that she should have been at the Opera with her relative, Lady Sefton, with whom she went everywhere at that time. But it is unlikely that the Prince, except for the mere love of intrigue, would have had the lady followed home, for Lady Sefton was well known to him, and he could have gone to her box and requested that Mrs. Fitzherbert should be presented to him. Besides, there were plenty who could have told him of the "lovely Fitzherbert," who, if she were not in the Prince's set, was a lady of the first fashion, who had already created a sensation by her beauty. The Prince was a connoisseur in female loveliness, but hers was of an unusual type. Her wealth of golden hair was unpowdered, the warm pallor of her cheeks was unrouged, her lustrous eyes were also innocent of art, and her sunny smile was guileless. She had not yet developed the perhaps too aquiline nose that came in later years, her profile was exquisite, and the curves of her beautiful figure were not yet marred by being too round.

The Prince always vowed that he fell in love with the lovely young widow at first sight, but then he vowed that of many. After their meeting, by whatever means effected, he took care not to lose sight of her again. He lost no time in becoming better acquainted with her; he eagerly sought her society, and found her not only beautiful, but gifted and attractive—attractive to him in a way no woman had been before. His passion increased by leaps and bounds. He made opportu-

nities of meeting her, he followed her everywhere, he was always at her side, and his attentions to her were so marked that before long they became the most engrossing topic of fashionable conversation.

The Prince soon found that Mrs. Fitzherbert was of quite another calibre to the ladies whom he had hitherto honoured with his preference. At first she accepted his homage for what it was worth, and the marked attentions of the young and handsome Prince, with whom half the women in London were in love, flattered her vanity if it did not touch her heart. The Prince exerted himself to the utmost to please her, and his utmost was very good indeed, but she did not treat his devotion seriously. She insisted on regarding the gay and graceful [illegible] that passed between them as nothing more than the amusement of the passing hour, to be forgotten on the morrow. She trusted to her own good sense to keep his devotion within due limits, but the Prince did not recognise any limits where his passions were concerned. He grew more impetuous and more fervid, and opposition or caution only served to make him keener. She could not parry an attack so ardent and so prolonged, her weapons of defence were beaten down one by one, until [illegible] she was forced to realise that there was more behind his [illegible] than mere gallantry, or the facile protestations of an amorous boy. Then she became alarmed, and strove too late to break off the acquaintance, but the Prince was not to be [illegible]; the more she opposed him the more persistent [illegible] attentions. There was no extravagance [illegible] of which he was not capable, and the [illegible]

lest her good name should become compromised. It did not matter what line she took, whether she met him with firmness and indifference, whether she besought him with tears and entreaties to leave her in peace, or met his vows with incredulity or ridicule. Whatever she did only served to inflame his ardour.

Mrs. Fitzherbert was at her wits' end how to escape the Prince's importunities. She did not leave London until the season was over, for she had many friends, she loved society, and was generally admired. She did not need the Prince's admiration to give a *cachet* to her social success, for it hindered rather than helped her. When she retired to her villa at Richmond in the summer he pursued her there, and contrived on some pretext or another to spend hours daily in her society. It is said that the popular ballad[1]—

> "*I'd crowns resign to call thee mine,*
> Sweet lass of Richmond Hill"—

was inspired by the Prince's devotion to Mrs. Fitzherbert which had by now become the talk of the town. But this seems open to doubt, for the lady was hardly "a lass" at the time, being in the twenty-eighth year of her age, and twice a widow. She was old enough certainly to see the folly of encouraging the Prince's devotion, and to realise that she had everything to lose and nothing to gain by such an entanglement. Whither could it lead? She had told him in the words Lady Waldegrave once used to the Duke of Gloucester, "that though she was too inconsiderable a person to become his wife,

[1] The ballad was sung at Vauxhall in 1789.



GEORGE PRINCE OF WALES

(From the Painting by Thomas Gainsborough *at Aske by permission of the* Marquess of Zetland)

she was [illegible] The Duke [illegible] by [illegible] took place [illegible] Moreover the [illegible] of [illegible] of the [illegible] Roman Catholic [illegible] and she would [illegible] sacrifice her [illegible] principles [illegible] fortune and [illegible] or nothing [illegible] it would be [illegible] her. Her [illegible] deny her love [illegible] and who [illegible] dom for her [illegible] refused to see [illegible] "She resisted," [illegible] anxiety and [illegible] the most accomplished [illegible] well aware of the [illegible] flattering demonstrations [illegible]

So things [illegible] The Prince had [illegible] the extravagance of [illegible] could not, and [illegible] passed days and [illegible] His chosen friends [illegible]

but we are told that the Duchess of Devonshire was selected. She was certainly more pliable than Lady Sefton, and was besides a friend of both Mrs. Fitzherbert and the Prince. This difficulty overcome, Mrs. Fitzherbert entered the coach which was waiting outside, and drove with the four men to Devonshire House. There she found the Duchess, who assented willingly, delighted at the idea of taking part in so romantic an adventure. Accompanied by the Duchess, Mrs. Fitzherbert drove to Carlton House, and was at once admitted to the Prince's presence. She found him in his private apartment on the ground floor, which overlooked the garden and St. James's Park. He was pale and covered with blood which issued from a wound in his side, the wound which his friends assured her had been self-inflicted by the Prince in consequence of her cruelty. According to the Prince, he had fallen upon his sword. According to another account, he had stabbed himself with a dagger. According to a third, he had tried to shoot himself, but hit the head of his bed instead; the pistol had been taken away from him, he then possessed himself of a table knife and drove it into his side. This would go to show that he was either half-mad or half-drunk, or, between the two, had worked himself up to a frenzy. The theory has also been put forward that the Prince had simply been "blooded" by Keate to relieve the violence of his passion, and he had dabbled the blood about his clothes to make himself look more interesting in the eyes of his beloved. However this may have been, he was successful in arousing her sympathies. The sight of her lover in

such a plight so overcame Mrs. Fitzherbert that "she was deprived almost of consciousness." This was exactly what the Prince wanted. He pushed home his advantage by vowing that "nothing would induce him to live unless she promised to become his wife, and permitted him to put a ring round her finger." The frightened lady gave the promise, for she firmly believed that nothing else would save him from self-destruction, and a ring, one borrowed from the Duchess of Devonshire, who, with the men before mentioned, were interested witnesses of the scene, was put upon her finger, and so completed the ceremony. Mrs. Fitzherbert's acquiescence calmed the Prince, and trusting to her promise to be his wife he suffered her to depart. She drove back with the Duchess to Devonshire House, the four men following, and a deposition was drawn up, signed and sealed by each one of the party.[1]

When Mrs. Fitzherbert returned to her own house and could look back quietly over the events of the exciting day, she clearly saw that it was not a ceremony which could be binding either on her honour or her conscience. It was in short a mock marriage, and the four "gentlemen" who had planned it had conspired against her honour. From this conspiracy she exonerated the Prince, who had frequently expressed himself as ready and willing to marry her; then and all her life she believed that the Prince had sought to kill himself for her sake, and that nothing but her compliance with his wishes

[1] Mrs. Fitzherbert told Lord Stourton after George IV.'s death that "for all she knew to the contrary it [the deposition] might still be there."—Langdale, *op. cit.*

at the moment had saved him from self-destruction. Half a century later, when she narrated this extraordinary incident to her relative, Lord Stourton, he suggested "that some trick had been practised and that it was not really the blood of His Royal Highness," but she assured him to the contrary. She declared that "she had frequently seen the scar,"[1] and added the not very convincing proof that some brandy-and-water was near his bedside. In her bewilderment she was not at the time a very critical observer, and like the Prince she was of an excitable and emotional temperament. Like many another woman, even the most diffident, she cherished the secret belief that her lover would be ready to die for her sake. Her romantic sympathies were aroused, and she was touched by this proof of his devotion. But now that the immediate danger was over her fears on her own account returned with redoubled force. She realised her peril, and, always swayed by impulse, she resolved to carry out her intention of flight. She wrote a letter that same evening to Lord Southampton, denouncing the conduct of himself and his colleagues in enticing her to Carlton House. She protested against what had taken place there, and declared that, as she was taken by surprise, she could not be considered a free agent. The next morning she left England.

[1] The Rev. Johnes Knight also said that the Prince showed him the scar when he wanted him to perform the marriage between him and Mrs. Fitzherbert.

CHAPTER IV

FLIGHT

(1784—1785)

MRS FITZHERBERT went first to Aix la Chapelle, the ancient city of Charlemagne In those days Aix-la-Chapelle was a favourite health resort, and much frequented by English as well as by foreign notabilities The medicinal powers of its sulphur springs were famous all over Europe, and the comparative nearness of Aix la Chapelle to England made it a formidable rival to Bath and Cheltenham among English people as a resort, not only of health but of pleasure Mrs Fitzherbert visited Aix at intervals throughout her life On this occasion she stayed there for some weeks, and on leaving she crossed the frontier to the neighbouring country of Holland and went to The Hague The Hague was also a resort of English people, many of whom lived there, as they used to live at Breda, for motives of economy, a motive which did not enter in Mrs Fitzherbert's case But at this time there were comparatively few English at The Hague, for Holland was in an unsettled state torn by conflicting parties within, and harassed from without by the opposing interests of France and England France had encouraged the state to form a pure republic, independent of the Stadtholder, and so render it a

French province. The English policy was to preserve the state's independence and to form an Anglo-Dutch alliance.

The Stadtholder, who was a grandson of George II.,[1] favoured the English policy, and was anxious to strengthen his dynasty by an alliance between one of his daughters and the Prince of Wales. The Stadtholder was weak and vacillating, but his consort[2] was a high-spirited, clever and accomplished princess. Her domestic life was unhappy, and her public life one of perpetual anxiety. It is strange that Mrs. Fitzherbert should have elected to go to The Hague at a time when the country was on the verge of civil war, and the reigning family on the brink of ruin, but she probably had introductions to the court of Orange, for she was received with the greatest kindness by the Stadtholder and his family. The Stadtholder was proud of his descent from the Royal Family of Great Britain, and was always willing to welcome English people for their own sake. It would seem, however, that Mrs. Fitzherbert was admitted to terms of unusual intimacy, and the young Princess of Orange in particular, who wished to be Princess of Wales, honoured her with her confidence. Personal kinship and public interest marked the Princess out as a likely candidate, and she, knowing that Mrs. Fitzherbert was well known in the fashionable world of London, plied her with questions concerning the Prince and the English

1 Anne, Princess Royal, the eldest daughter of George II., married in 1733 the Prince of Orange.

2 The Princess of Orange was the daughter of Prince William Augustus of Prussia, and a niece of Frederick the Great.

court, all unconscious of the fact that she was confiding in "her most dangerous rival."[1] The position was exceedingly embarrassing to Mrs. Fitzherbert. Of the Prince she knew much, a great deal more than she cared to say, but of the English court she could have known little more than any other woman of fashion who attended Queen Charlotte's drawing-rooms. She parried the questions of the would-be Princess of Wales as well as she could, and said nothing of what had passed between the Prince and herself. Indeed she saw, or thought she saw, in the possible alliance an escape from her own difficulties, and would willingly have furthered it if she could. She thus excused herself from any reflection of double-dealing. Of course she could do nothing either to help or hinder the union, and subsequent events proved that a marriage of policy, such as this, would have been a very slight obstacle in the path of the Prince of Wales where his desires were concerned. The projected marriage fell to the ground. In after years, when the Stadtholder was a fugitive in England, Mrs. Fitzherbert met both him and the Princess again. By that time her relations with the Prince of Wales were well known. The Princess of Orange good-humouredly acquitted her former friend of all blame (perhaps she thought she had a lucky escape), but the Stadtholder treated Mrs. Fitzherbert with great coolness, and evidently attributed to her the failure of the match.

During Mrs. Fitzherbert's visit to The Hague, no hint of her entanglement with the Prince of Wales reached the court of Orange. The Stadtholder

[1] Langdale, *op. cit.*

treated her with every courtesy, and when she brought her sojourn to a close he placed his state barge at her disposal to convey her to Antwerp. The cause which probably led Mrs. Fitzherbert to take her departure from The Hague, where she was so well received, was the arrival there, at the end of December 1784, of Sir James Harris,[1] who had been accredited British Minister to the court of Orange. Harris was an able diplomatist, an astute man of the world, and a consummate courtier; he was honoured by the confidence of George III. and Queen Charlotte, who often employed him in private matters with regard to their troublesome family. He was also on terms of intimate friendship with the Prince of Wales, and the story of the Prince's devotion to Mrs. Fitzherbert must have been well known to him. Mrs. Fitzherbert therefore did not care to meet him at this juncture, and hastened her departure from The Hague in order to avoid him.

She went first to Paris; but as she sought retirement, she did not stay there long. Early in 1785 we hear of her in Switzerland, and then a little later at Plombiers in Lorraine. At Plombiers we must leave her for a time and return to the Prince of Wales.

The day after the scene at Carlton House the Prince of Wales "went down into the country to Lord Southampton's for change of air." After the violent paroxysm he had undergone and weakness from loss of blood, a few days' quiet must have been

[1] James Harris, first Earl of Malmesbury (1746–1820).

necessary. He was probably advised to let Mrs. Fitzherbert rest a while, and renew the attack on his return to London. But his plans were baffled. Lord Southampton received the letter Mrs. Fitzherbert wrote to him the day before she left England, and he communicated it to the Prince. We can imagine the outburst of rage and emotion with which the royal lover received the news. According to Lord Holland, "he did not conceal his passion, or his despair at her leaving England for the Continent."[1]

His first thought was to follow her, but Mrs. Fitzherbert had crossed the Channel before the news reached him, and he had no trace of her hiding-place. Besides, the heir-apparent could not leave the country without the consent of the King. That consent with passionate eagerness he now sought to obtain. He based his request on the ground of his heavy debts and his wish to retrench. The King, who had heard of his son's infatuation for the "lovely Fitzherbert," did not accede to the Prince's prayer, but he affected to temporise, and seized the opportunity to demand from the Prince a full statement of his debts, giving him to understand that if such a statement were supplied he might liquidate them—an understanding which he had no intention of carrying out.

Thus matters went on for several months, the King keeping the Prince in suspense, the Prince pining to get away. All this time the unfortunate youth, worried by his pecuniary embarrassments, and

[1] "Posthumous Memoirs of the Whig Party," by Lord Holland, 1852.

distracted by his apparently hopeless passion, was in a state bordering on unreason. He was one who could not keep his sorrows to himself. All his friends, especially the Duchess of Devonshire and Fox, were the recipients of his woes, and they offered him consolation in vain. To again quote Lord Holland: "Mrs. Fox [then Mrs. Armitstead], who was living at St. Anne's [Chertsey], has repeatedly assured me that he came down thither more than once to converse with her and Mr. Fox on the subject, that he cried by the hour, that he testified to the sincerity and violence of his passion and his despair by the most extravagant expressions and actions, rolling on the floor, striking his forehead, tearing his hair, falling into hystericks, and swearing that he would abandon the country, forego the crown, sell his jewels and plate, and scrape together a competence to fly with the object of his affections to America."[1]

This last must be regarded as an exaggeration of speech, for it is certain that the lady would not have fled with him to America, even if he had been free to propose it. But the scene goes to show that Mrs. Fitzherbert had based her rejection of her lover's advances on the plea of his position, and not on the ground of her indifference, or want of affection. Her heart was already his, and she was not following its promptings, but considering his interests in removing herself out of his reach. If he suffered, she suffered too. It was hard that she should be driven into exile, separated from her family and friends, and compelled to seek refuge in an obscure

[1] "Memoirs of the Whig Party," *op. cit.*

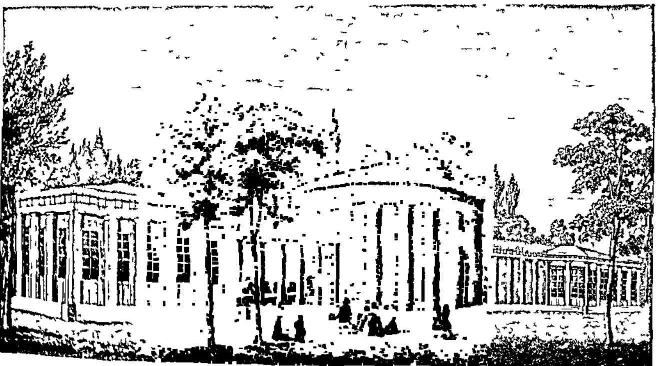
foreign town like a fugitive hiding from justice. She was fighting a battle between her duty and her inclination. Knowing the fickleness of men in general, and of princes in particular, she thought (though she did not in her heart hope) that if she kept away long enough her lover would forget her. The Prince of Wales was notoriously changeable, and easily attracted by the "Cynthia of the minute." But in his early devotion to Maria Fitzherbert, in all fairness be it said, he showed a constancy, a firmness, and a persistency worthy of all praise, and not at all in keeping with the fickle character generally attributed to him. There is no doubt that his love for her was deep and genuine, and that it was the great passion of his life. She was in truth the only woman whom he ever really loved.

Foiled in his attempt to follow Mrs. Fitzherbert, the Prince set himself to discover her hiding-place. In this he was more successful. He despatched emissaries far and wide, and, aided by the Duke of Orleans, he soon discovered where she was concealed. Having once found her, he had her shadowed wherever she went. Then began a ceaseless correspondence. He wrote to her pages and pages of passionate pleadings, of heartrending appeals, of prayers for her aid, of threats of self-destruction if she remained obdurate—of everything in short that could touch or move the heart of a susceptible woman. The Prince could write admirable letters when he wished, no one better, letters full of grace of phrase and felicity of diction, and in these epistles his unrivalled powers of persuasion and sophistry came into full play. Whether Mrs. Fitzherbert

answered his letters or not, or how she answered them, made no difference. Whether she moved from Paris to Switzerland, or from Switzerland to Lorraine, she was still followed by the Prince's emissaries, and by his letters. "Couriers after couriers," we are told, "passed through France carrying the letters and propositions of the Prince to her *in France and Switzerland. The Duke of* Orleans was the medium of this correspondence: The speed of the couriers exciting the suspicions of the French Government, three of them were at different times put in prison."[1] They were arrested on suspicion of being concerned in some political plot, but the Duke of Orleans was soon able to make it clear that they were only the messengers of Cupid. Otherwise it is possible that Mrs. Fitzherbert might have become a suspect too. Even the influence of the Duke of Orleans did not shield her wholly from the suspicion of political intrigue. We find, many years after, her enemies in England declaring "that she had been in correspondence in France with the Gros Abbé, the bastard brother of the Duke of Orleans, the Abbé Taylor and some Irish friars in many parts of Italy. The aim of this correspondence was said to be to harass the existing administration (Mr. Pitt's) and to pave the way for the introduction of Catholicism into England."[2] These falsehoods were on the face of them absurd.

[1] Langdale, *op. cit.*

[2] "Letter of Nemesis to Alfred," a scurrilous pamphlet published *circa* 1789. It was written by the Rev. Philip Wither, who styles himself "Chaplain to the Dowager Lady Hereford," but was better known as a writer of political pamphlets. He was condemned to imprisonment in Newgate for gross libel, and died therein, before his term of imprisonment had expired.



AIX-LA-CHAPELLE

Whither Mrs Fitzherbert fled in 1784

Mrs. Fitzherbert was the last woman in the world to proselytise or to concern herself in intrigues, political or ecclesiastical; but to such imputations she was exposed by the reckless proceedings of the Prince of Wales.

Excuse may be found in the violence of the Prince's passion. That he was at this time "willing to make any sacrifice"[1] to gain her is true, in substance and in fact. As the object of his desire would not come to him, his one wish was to go to her. He seems to have had it in his mind to offer her a morganatic marriage according to the laws of Hanover, and to live quietly with her abroad, perhaps in Hanover. He strove to overcome his father's obstinacy by promising to reform and retrench if he were allowed to go abroad. But the King now met his son's demand with an uncompromising refusal. He had played with him for months, and obtained a full account of his debts, except for one item which the Prince said he was unable to account for in detail, pleading that it was "a debt of honour." The King seized upon this as an excuse for refusing to pay any of them, saying that "if it were a debt the Prince was ashamed to explain it was one he ought not to pay."[2] The Prince, enraged at this treatment, thought he saw in his father's refusal an excuse to escape abroad. The King dared him to leave the kingdom without his leave, and even taunted him, so the Prince afterwards said, with his im-

[1] Holland, *op. cit.*

[2] "Diaries and Correspondence of James Harris, First Earl of Malmesbury," 1844.

potence to reach Mrs. Fitzherbert. The King's taunts only made him more desperate.

The Prince on April 27, 1785, sent for Sir James Harris, who was then in London on leave of absence, and after giving him an account of the King's treatment, he declared that in the matter of his debts "he saw no means of relief left but by getting abroad." He asked Harris about The Hague, whether he [the Prince] could go there in a private character, and if so how he, as the King's representative, would receive him. From this it would seem that the Prince knew Mrs. Fitzherbert had been in that city, and thought she would shortly be returning there. But he did not once mention her name to Harris in the curious conversation that followed,[1] though it was at the back of everything he said. To the Prince's question the adroit diplomatist replied :—

"I should be very sorry, Sir, to see you in Holland otherwise than in a character which would allow me to receive you in a manner conformable with the respect and affection I bear your Royal Highness; but your coming abroad without your having obtained the King's consent implies that you will come after it has been refused you, and, you may rest assured, in that case I shall receive orders how to act towards you before your arrival; and those orders, let them be ever so much in contradiction to my feelings, I must obey.

"*Prince.* Certainly. I should be the last person

1 The conversation is quoted in full, only abbreviating some of the speeches of the pompous Harris which had nothing to do with the case. Those who wish to read it in full will find it in the "Malmesbury Diaries."

to wish you to do otherwise. But what am I to do? Am I to be refused the right of every individual? Cannot I travel legally, as a private man, without the King's consent?

"*Harris.* I think it very immaterial for your Royal Highness to know whether you can, or cannot, legally travel without His Majesty's consent; since it is evident that you cannot with any propriety to the public, or satisfaction to yourself, cross the seas without it.

"*Prince.* Why not? I wish to travel on a plan of economy; to be unknown; to live in retirement.

"*Harris.* Without entering into the almost impossibility of your Royal Highness making so rapid a transition in your ways of life, I confess I see no event would give me so much pain, as an Englishman, as to see a Prince of Wales abroad under such a description. . . .

"*Prince.* I feel what you say: but what can I do? The King proposed to me to lay by £10,000 a year to pay my debts, at a time when, with the strictest economy, my expenses are twice my income. I am ruined if I stay in England. I disgrace myself as a man.

"*Harris.* Your Royal Highness, give me leave to say, will find no relief in travelling the way you propose. You will be either slighted, or, what is worse, become the object of political intrigue at every court you pass through. . . .

"*Prince.* But if I avoid all great courts? If I keep to the smaller ones of Germany, can this happen? I may there live unnoticed and unknown.

"*Harris.* Impossible, Sir. The title of the Earl

of Chester will be only a mask which covers the Prince of Wales, and, as such, your actions will ever be judged. . . .

"*Prince.* You think I mean to go to France. I shall keep to the Empire, and perhaps to Italy.

"*Harris.* What I say applies to all countries, Sir. . . .

"*Prince.* But what can I do, my dear Harris? *The King hates me.* He wants to set me at variance with my brother. I have no hopes from him. He won't let even Parliament assist me till I marry.

"*Harris.* But there exists so cordial an affection between your Royal Highness and the Duke of York, that I should think he might be employed most usefully to reconcile the King to your Royal Highness. It cannot be a difficult task when undertaken by a brother.

"*Prince.* If he thought it possible, he would come over [from Hanover] immediately. He has often expressed his concern at our disunion, and declares he never will leave the Continent till he can see a prospect of bringing the King to enter into my situation.

"*Harris.* Surely, Sir, the King could not object to any increase of income Parliament thought proper to allow your Royal Highness?

"*Prince.* I believe he would. *He hates me; he always did, from seven years old.*

"*Harris.* His Majesty *may* be displeased and dissatisfied with your Royal Highness, but surely he cannot hate you; and I am convinced nothing would make both him and the Queen so happy as to restore their affections to you. It would be the

greatest blessing to the nation, and the greatest comfort to the Royal Family.

"*Prince.* It may be so, but it cannot be. We are too wide asunder ever to meet. The King has deceived me, he has made me deceive others; I cannot trust him, and he will never believe me.

"*Harris.* I am sorry your Royal Highness thinks so. But I think your Royal Highness should try every possible means before you carry into execution your plan of travelling.

"*Prince.* I will think it over, but I see no obstacle. We will meet again soon."[1]

After this conversation, Harris, who was honoured with the confidence both of the father and the son, tried hard to effect a reconciliation between them, and to induce the King to settle the Prince's debts, but he underrated the strength of the [illegible] currents of personal hatred and political intrigue. Pitt, the Prime Minister, who felt that some of the money would be spent on political purposes against the Government, refused to do anything for the Prince of Wales unless he would first break with Fox and the Opposition. In this attitude he was supported, if not instigated, by the King, who added to his hatred of the [illegible] jealousy of his eldest son. The Prince [illegible] he could never satisfy his father [illegible] and he refused to sacrifice his friends [illegible] himself in vain. Harris [illegible] that he could [illegible] certain vague [illegible]

[1] "Malmesbury Letters [illegible] of Wales [illegible]

from the King, requested another interview with the Prince of Wales, which was granted.

During the month which had elapsed since his last conversation with Harris a change had come over the Prince. Perhaps Mrs. Fitzherbert had written to him, refusing to listen to him if he came abroad, entreating him for his own sake not to come. Or perhaps she even held out the hope if he would hearken to her counsels she would return to England. Something, it is impossible to say what, must have passed between them in the interval, above and beyond the remonstrances of the Prince's friends, for when, by appointment, on May 23, Harris entered the Prince's dressing-room at Carlton House for a second interview, he was greeted with these words:[1]—

"*Prince.* If you are come, my dear Harris, to dissuade me again from travelling, let me anticipate your kind intentions by telling you I have dismissed that idea from my mind. I see all my other friends, as well as yourself, are against it, and I subscribe to their opinion.

"*Harris.* I should not have presumed to have mentioned that subject again to your Royal Highness; but after what you have told me, Sir, allow me to express my infinite satisfaction.

"*Prince.* I am glad to have pleased *you*, at least, if I have not pleased myself. Yet I am sure you will be concerned to see the distressed and unbecoming light in which I must appear by remaining in England.

[1] The following conversation is also abridged so far as Sir James Harris is concerned.

"*Harris.* This had better appear here (admitting it to be the case) than to strangers. But, Sir, the purport of my troubling your Royal Highness was to obviate this unpleasant circumstance."

Harris then proceeded to propound his scheme for the settlement of the Prince's debts, which, as it came to nothing, it is unnecessary to detail here. The Prince listened in silence, and then said.—

"I thank you; but it will not do. I tell you the King hates me. He would turn out Pitt for entertaining such an idea; besides, I cannot abandon Charles and my friends.

"*Harris.* Mr. Fox and the Duke of Portland have told me often, Sir, that they by no means wish your Royal Highness to condescend, on their account, to take any share in party concerns. They have repeatedly declared that a Prince of Wales ought to be of no party.

"*Prince.* Well, but admitting this, and supposing that I can get rid of a partiality in politics you seem to condemn, I tell you, Harris, the King never will listen to it.

"*Harris.* But, Sir, I presuppose a reconciliation between you and His Majesty. Surely this would be grateful to the King himself, and most particularly so to the Queen.

"*Prince.* Why, my dear Harris, will you force me to repeat to you that the *King hates me?* He will never be reconciled to me.

"*Harris.* It cannot be, Sir. If you order me, I will ask an audience of him, and fling myself at his feet.

"*Prince.* I love you too well to encourage you to

undertake so useless a commission. If you will not credit me, you will, perhaps, credit the King himself. Take and read all our correspondence for these last six months.

"The Prince here opened an escritoire, and took out a large bundle of papers, which he read to me. It consisted of various letters which had passed between him and the King, beginning with the one in which he asked his leave to go abroad in autumn 1784.

"It is needless to attempt to relate precisely the contents of this correspondence; it is sufficient to observe that the Prince's letters were full of respect and deference, written with great plainness of style and simplicity. Those of the King were also well written, but harsh and severe; constantly refusing every request the Prince made, and reprobating in each of them his extravagance and dissipated manner of living. They were void of every expression of parental kindness or affection; and, after both hearing them read, and perusing them myself, I was compelled to subscribe to the Prince's opinion, and to confess there was very little appearance of making any impression on His Majesty in favour of His Royal Highness. I resumed, however, the conversation as follows:—

"*Harris.* I am hurt to a degree, Sir, at what I have read. But still, Sir, the Queen must have a reconciliation so much at heart, that, through her and your sisters, it surely might be effected.

"*Prince.* Look ye, Harris; I cannot bring myself to say I am in the wrong when I am in the right. The King has used me ill; and I wish the public

knew what you now know, and was to pronounce between us.

"*Harris.* I should be very sorry, indeed, Sir, if this was known beyond these walls; for I am much mistaken if the public would not pronounce a judgment widely different from that you think.

"*Prince.* This is a cruel truth, if it be true what you say; but it is of no use to investigate it; my case never will go to that tribunal.

"*Harris.* May I suggest, Sir, the idea of your marrying? It would, I should think, be most agreeable to the King, and, I am certain, most grateful to the nation.

"*Prince (with vehemence).* I never will marry! My resolution is taken on that subject. I have settled it with Frederick. No, I never will marry!

"*Harris.* Give me leave to say, Sir, most respectfully, that you cannot have really come to such a resolution; and you *must* marry, Sir. You owe it to the country, to the King, to yourself.

"*Prince.* I owe nothing to the King. Frederick will marry, and the crown will descend to his children; and as for myself, I do not see how it affects me.

"*Harris.* Till you are married, Sir, and have children, you have no solid hold on the affections of the people, even while you are Prince of Wales; but if you come to the throne a bachelor, and His Royal Highness the Duke of York is married, and has sons to succeed you, your situation, when King, will be more painful than it is at this moment. Our own history furnishes strong examples of the truth of what I say.

"The Prince was greatly struck with this observation. He walked about the room, apparently angry. I moved towards the door, saying, 'I perceive, Sir, I have said too much: you will allow me to withdraw. I am sure I shall be forgiven an hour hence.'

"*Prince.* You are forgiven now, my dear Harris. I am angry with myself, not with you. Don't question me any more. I will think of what you said. Adieu. God bless you."[1]

The most remarkable passage in this conversation was the Prince's vehement declaration that he would never marry, and that he had "settled it with Frederick." By this he meant that he would never make a marriage of policy after the manner of princes, or a marriage in accordance with the terms of his father's recently passed Royal Marriage Act, and he made this declaration, be it noted, at a time when not only the King and the Government, but also his political and personal friends, were agreed in urging him to contract such an alliance. His declaration shows that he had by this time fully determined to offer Mrs. Fitzherbert such a marriage as it was in his power to offer her—a marriage which the law of England would treat as illegal, and which in Hanover would be regarded as morganatic—that is to say, though recognised as a marriage, it would not give the wife the rank of her husband.[2] The Prince had this in mind when he said "Frederick will marry, and the crown will descend to his

[1] "Malmesbury Diaries": My Second Conference with the Prince of Wales.

[2] Such a marriage was that of his ancestor, Duke George William of Celle, with Eleanore d'Olbreuse, mother of Sophia Dorothea.

children," for he knew that if he had any children by his contemplated marriage with Mrs. Fitzherbert, they would be deemed incapable of succeeding to the throne of England, and would be treated as *infantes nullius*, or dead in law.[1]

Harris did not realise the full force of the Prince's words at the time. He was astonished at the summary rejection of his well-meant efforts; but later, when the rumour of the Prince's marriage to Mrs Fitzherbert reached his ears, it became clear to him that the idea was in the Prince's mind when he spoke with him, and that Mrs. Fitzherbert was "the great obstacle in the way of his accepting my proposal."[2]

All this time Mrs Fitzherbert remained in Lorraine, shadowed by the Prince's spies, and the recipient of his continued letters. Still she tried, with a force ever growing feebler, to fight off his assault. But she was getting tired of her self-imposed exile, and presently an incident occurred which convinced her that it was impossible for this state of affairs to continue indefinitely.

Despite the strict retirement in which she lived she became the object of the attentions of the notorious Marquis de Bellois, who offered her marriage. The Marquis was one of the handsomest men in France, and one of the most polished and accomplished scoundrels in Europe. The young English

[1] What their claims might have been to the crown of Hanover need not be discussed here, as none were born

[2] The Prince wrote later (1799) to Mrs Fitzherbert that Harris had been informed by him "of every, even the minutest, circumstance of our marriage"

widow, beautiful, well-connected and well-dowered, was a fair mark for a needy French nobleman. She refused him in the most uncompromising manner, and when, despite her refusal, he continued to urge his suit, she left Plombiers for Paris. She had fled from England to protect her reputation, but this affair showed her that she had only escaped one danger to encounter another. She was too young and too beautiful a woman to continue to live alone and unprotected in a foreign country, away from her family and her friends. That she had lived abroad all these months, surrounded by an atmosphere of secrecy, was no fault of her own, but it served to whet the tongue of scandal. Why all this mystery, people asked, unless there was something wrong? She had done nothing to be ashamed of, yet she could not explain her position without compromising others. Besides, her explanation would be received with scornful incredulity by the gay world of Paris and of London, who would neither understand nor respect her scruples. Moreover, she was of a temperament which could not bear to live alone. Though not devoted to pleasure, she was fond of society and amusement, and enjoyed the companionship of her friends. She reflected also that, so far, her object in going abroad had signally failed, for time and distance only seemed to make the Prince more eager. Herein may be found the first hint of her yielding.

It is impossible to sketch accurately the combination of circumstances by which, little by little, Mrs. Fitzherbert's resistance was beaten down. She began to hesitate, and hesitating was lost. "Wrought

upon and fearful," she was first "induced to promise formally and deliberately that she would never marry any other person."[1] From promising to marry no one but the Prince, to promising to marry him was only a step. But before taking it she stipulated for conditions which would satisfy her conscience. The Prince, who had no conscience at all where his desires were concerned, was willing to grant her everything in his power. She had not been satisfied with the grotesque ceremony at Carlton House, then he would offer her a real marriage, as real as he could make it, one that would satisfy her scruples and meet the requirements of her Church. More than that she did not ask, and more than that he could not give, for the Royal Marriage Act lay athwart their path. She knew of this Act as well as he, and with him was willing to risk the danger of violating it, but still she hesitated. She was unwilling to encourage this prodigal son into a flagrant act of disobedience to the wishes of his father. The Prince was ready to meet this scruple, as he had met the others, by his sophistry which never failed. In a letter of abnormal length (thirty-seven pages),[2] for he was always a man of many words, he assured her that "his father would connive at the union." This of course was not true, but perhaps the Prince persuaded himself that it was, for he had extraordinary powers of self-deception. It is impossible to believe that the King would have connived at the violation of the Act which he had forced through

[1] Langdale, *op. cit.*

[2] Lord Stourton says that Mrs. Fitzherbert showed him this letter "entirely in the handwriting of the Prince."

Parliament only thirteen years before, framed t
prevent just such a marriage as this. He was
conscientious man, and would not have thu
stultified himself. But with the Prince of Wales i
was a settled conviction that his father hated him
and would gladly have seen him supplanted by hi
younger brother, the Duke of York. "I hav
settled it all with Frederick," he told Harris
"Frederick will marry, and the crown will descen
to his children." The Prince may have though
that the King would wink at his irregular and mor
ganatic marriage in order to bring about such
consummation.

But whether the Prince believed what he wrote o
not, his word was all-sufficient for Mrs. Fitzherbert
The time had not come when she had learned t
lament his fatal disregard of truth. She believe
implicitly all he told her, and all his promises an
vows. She could no longer doubt the sincerity o
his love. He had endured a long and cruel proba-
tion; she had kept away from him, and had resiste
all his prayers and importunities, for more than
year, and yet at the end of the period his love fo
her was unchanged. He had answers for all he
objections, he granted all her stipulations, he wa
willing to risk everything for her sake. She coul
not change her religion, and therefore the Prince
by marrying a Roman Catholic (even though the
marriage might be illegal), ran the risk of forfeit-
ing his right of succession to the crown.[1] It was
said that Mrs. Fitzherbert did not realise this

[1] Section IX. of the Act of Settlement, 1689.

until later, but she knew, none better, the strong prejudice against Roman Catholics in England She knew, too, how much the Prince would damage his popularity by allying himself intimately with one of her faith, even though the connection were to the world not an honourable one How much greater, then, would be the outcry if their secret marriage ever became known? It was largely for this reason that she had withstood him so long, but since he was willing to take the risk for her sake, she was not the woman to deny him from fear of the consequences to herself And so, at last, worn out with his pleading, and moved by the chivalry of his devotion, she threw down her arms, and promised to return to England and become his wife It was no hasty, ill considered action, for she saw, we are told, "clearly and justly that she was about to plunge into inextricable difficulties, but having insisted upon conditions, such as would satisfy her conscience and justify her in the eyes of her own Church, she abandoned herself to her fate'[1] Once she surrendered she knew no half measures, she might have extracted any terms she pleased from the infatuated Prince, but with a rare disinterestedness, she asked for nothing beyond the one condition demanded by her conscience and her Church She left everything else to the honour of the man to whom she was henceforth to devote her life

It will always be an enigma what induced a woman

[1] Langdale, *op cit*

of Mrs. Fitzherbert's temperament and character to yield at the last. What led this pure and proud woman, with her definite ideas of right and wrong, to consent to an act which, if not wrong in itself, was at least capable of wrongful interpretation? But one thing at least is clear. Her motives were not interested. Perhaps she persuaded herself that she must make the sacrifice for his sake; perhaps she deluded herself that she was necessary to him—this headstrong, passionate, lovable youth, whose faults appeared to be all on the surface, and who was his own worst enemy. Perhaps she conceived it was her mission to rescue him from his evil advisers, and make him worthy of the high position which he was one day destined to fill. It may be, too, that her heart now spoke for the first time. She had been twice married before to men years older than herself, and these marriages were probably arranged for her by others; the union she now contemplated was not a marriage of convenience but of pure romance. There were in this adventure all the elements of romance, of secrecy, and of danger. A Prince, young and handsome as an Apollo, a lover passionate and ardent, laid his heart at her feet. She would have been less than a woman had she spurned it. She was weary of her self-imposed exile, weary of the loneliness of her life. There had come to her that hunger that comes sooner or later to every man and woman, the desire to take happiness with both hands, and count the world well lost—the desire to know, even though it be for one brief hour, the

heart of life. And this it may be claimed for Maria Fitzherbert, that despite all the suffering and disappointment of after years she at least had her hour.

Thus it follows that, after all, the simplest explanation of her yielding is the truest. She yielded because she loved him.

CHAPTER V

SURRENDER

(1785)

Mrs. Fitzherbert returned to England the first week of December 1785, after an exile of more than a year's duration. She travelled through to London, and went to her house in Park Street. It is said, on questionable authority, that the Prince of Wales went to Paris *incognito* and had an interview with Mrs. Fitzherbert, with the result that she consented to accompany him back to England.[1] It is unlikely that this took place, but it is probable that he went down to Dover to meet her, and escorted her to London, which would account for the rumour. Care was taken to prevent her return becoming known, but before long every one interested knew that she had come back. The Prince's household suspected that something unusual was taking place. There was an air of suppressed excitement about everything the Prince said and did which could not pass unnoticed, and when it became known that Mrs. Fitzherbert had returned from abroad, all in his immediate service felt that the state of uncer-

[1] Another rumour was that he had crossed from Brighton to Dieppe in the summer. Mrs. Fitzherbert met him there, and he had come to an arrangement with her then.



GEORGE, PRINCE OF WALES, AS "FLORIZEL"

(*After the Painting by* RICHARD COSWAY, R.A.)

tainty and unrest in which he had lived for the last year was nearing its end. There was not one of the Prince's real friends who did not contemplate *with alarm the possibility of such a marriage*, but the Prince was surrounded by parasites and flatterers, who were ready to aid and abet him on a course imprudent for himself and disastrous for the woman he loved. Others there were of his boon companions, reckless young "bloods," ever ready for an affair of gallantry, who, seeing that he was not to be dissuaded, fell in with his mood.

The Prince was not one who could keep a secret, and in this case he had to take two or three persons into his confidence, in order to make arrangements for his marriage. Though silence is a word written large over the gates of palaces, a secret which is known to two or three persons is soon a secret no longer. It is probable that some well-wisher of the Prince, who was in his confidence, so far betrayed him as to communicate with Fox, and urge him to do what he could to persuade the Prince from marrying Mrs. Fitzherbert. Fox was one of the first to hear of Mrs. Fitzherbert's arrival in London, and he regarded the news as serious. He knew from the Prince himself of his reckless passion and her prolonged resistance, and he felt that she would not have returned to England unless a way had been found to overcome her scruples. Moreover, the fact that the Prince had lately avoided him lent weight to his suspicions, that marriage and nothing else was in the Prince's mind. He resolved to make an effort to prevent such an

that the marriage would be a real one; but your Royal Highness knows as well as I, that according to the present laws of the country it *cannot*;[1] and I need not point out to your good sense what a source of uneasiness it must be to you, to her, and above all to the nation, to have it a matter of dispute and discussion, whether the Prince of Wales is, or is not, married. All speculations on the feelings of the publick are uncertain; but I doubt much whether an uncertainty of this kind, by keeping men's minds in perpetual agitation upon a matter of this moment, might not cause a greater ferment than any other possible situation. If there should be children from the marriage, I need not say how much the uneasiness (as well of yourselves as of the nation) must be aggravated. If anything could add to the weight of these considerations, it is the impossibility of remedying the mischiefs I have alluded to; for if your Royal Highness should think proper, when you are twenty-five years old, to notify to Parliament your intention to marry (by which means *alone* a *legal* marriage can be contracted), in what manner can it be notified? If the previous marriage is mentioned or owned, will it not be said that you have set at defiance the laws of your country; and that you now come to Parliament for a sanction for what you have already done in contempt of it? If there are children, will it not be said that we must look for future applications to legitimate them, and consequently be liable to disputes for the succession

[1] Fox here alludes to the Royal Marriage Act of 1772, which prevented the Prince from marrying before the age of twenty-five without the consent of the King.

between the eldest son, and the eldest son *after* the legal marriage? And will not the entire annulling of the whole marriage be suggested as the most secure way of preventing all such disputes? If the marriage is not mentioned to Parliament, but yet is known to have been solemnised, as it certainly will be known, if it takes place, these are the consequences—First, that at all events any child born in the interim is immediately illegitimated; and next, that arguments will be drawn from the circumstances of the concealed marriage against the publick one. It will be said, that a woman who has lived with you as your wife without being so, is not fit to be Queen of England;[1] and thus the very thing that is done for the sake of her reputation will be used against it: and what would make this worse would be, the marriage being known (though not officially communicated to Parliament), it would be impossible to deny the assertion; whereas, *if there was no marriage*, I conclude your intercourse would be carried on as it ought, in so private a way as to make it wholly inconsistent with decency or propriety for any one in publick to hazard such a suggestion. If, in consequence of your notification, steps should be taken in Parliament, and an Act passed (which, considering the present state of the power of the King and Ministry, is more than probable) to prevent your marriage, you will be reduced to the most difficult of all dilemmas with respect to the footing upon which

[1] This is outside the argument. There never was any question of Mrs Fitzherbert becoming Queen of England. She might have become Queen of Hanover, but never Queen of England without a repeal of the Act of Settlement.

your marriage is to stand for the future; and your children will be born to pretensions which must make their situation unhappy, if not dangerous. Their situations appear to me of all others the most to be pitied; and the more so, because the more indications persons born in such circumstances give of spirit, talents, or anything that is good, the more will they be suspected and oppressed, and the more will they regret the being deprived of what they must naturally think themselves entitled to.

"I could mention many other considerations upon this business, if I did not think those I have stated of so much importance, that smaller ones would divert your attention from them rather than add to their weight. That I have written with a freedom which on any other occasion would be unbecoming, I readily confess; and nothing would have induced me to do it, but a deep sense of my duty to a Prince who has honoured me with so much of his confidence, and who would have but an ill return for all his favour and goodness to me, if I were to avoid speaking truth to him, however disagreeable, at so critical a juncture. The sum of my humble advice, nay, of my most earnest entreaty, is this—that your Royal Highness would not think of marrying till you can marry legally. When that time comes, you must judge for yourself; and no doubt you will take into consideration, both what is due to private honour and your publick station. In the meanwhile, a mock marriage (for it can be no other) is neither honourable for any of the parties, nor, with respect to your Royal Highness, even safe. This appears so clear to me, that, if

I were Mrs. Fitzherbert's father or brother, I would advise her not by any means to agree to it, *and to prefer any other species of connection with you to one leading to so much misery and mischief.*[1]

"It is high time I should finish this very long and, perhaps your Royal Highness will think, ill-timed letter, but such as it is, it is dictated by pure zeal and attachment to your Royal Highness. With respect to Mrs. Fitzherbert, she is a person with whom I have scarcely the honour of being acquainted, but I hear from everybody that her character is irreproachable and her manners most amiable. Your Royal Highness knows, too, that I have not in my mind the same objection to intermarriages with Princes and subjects which many have.[2] But under the circumstances a marriage at present appears to me to be the most desperate measure for all parties concerned that their worst enemies could have suggested"[3]

This, it must be admitted, is, as a whole, a temperate and well-reasoned letter, worthy of the writer, and worthy of consideration from the recipient. But the cynical suggestion, "If I were Mrs. Fitzherbert's father or brother I would advise her not by any means to agree to it (the marriage), and to

[1] Lord Russell in his "Life of Fox" most disingenuously omits the words in italics from the letter, which he otherwise quotes in full

[2] Fox had strongly opposed the Royal Marriage Act

[3] This letter, together with the Prince's answer thereto, is quoted from the "Memoirs of the Whig Party," by Lord Holland, 1854 Lord Holland says, "The above rough draft of the letter which, though without signature, is all, excepting the date, in Fox's own handwriting, was found among his papers (after his death), together with the answer, written, dated, and signed by the Prince of Wales"

prefer any other species of connection with you to one leading to so much misery and mischief," is the weak link in the chain of argument which weakens all the rest. If we take into account the laxity of the period, it was not an unusual sentiment to come from a free-thinking man of the world, who, at the time he wrote it, was living openly in a "species of connection" with a woman who was not his wife. But it shows that Fox, with all his shrewdness and worldly wisdom, was incapable of understanding a woman of the type of Mrs. Fitzherbert. Neither could he enter into her religious scruples, or realise that what he called a "mock marriage" (it was undoubtedly illegal) would be a valid marriage in her sight, and valid according to the doctrine of the Church to which she belonged. "Mrs. Fitzherbert," says Mr. Langdale, "was a Catholic, and educated in the principles of the Catholic religion, whose doctrine can admit no difference between a prince and a peasant, condemning alike the criminal indulgences of either, and maintaining in both the indissoluble sacredness of the marriage contract."[1] These considerations meant nothing to Fox. Yet it is not necessary to be a man of strict morality to realise that they would be vital to a virtuous woman. Herein, we take it, lies the difference between Fox and the Prince. To Fox every woman was "at heart a rake," but the Prince knew better, and realised that between the woman whom he wished to make his wife and "those others" there was an impassable gulf.

[1] Langdale, *op. cit.*

It was perhaps this obliquity of moral vision which accounted for Fox's readiness to swallow the glib denial, or rather evasion, which the Prince sent him the following day. It was much easier, more natural, for him to believe that Mrs. Fitzherbert had yielded at discretion, than that the Prince had agreed to her stipulation of a marriage. In view of what happened later, the Prince's answer to Fox's letter is very important, as it is probably the only direct communication that Fox ever received from the Prince on the subject.

H.R.H. the Prince of Wales to the Right Hon. C. J. Fox, M.P.

"MY DEAR CHARLES,—Your letter of last night afforded me more satisfaction than I can find words to express; as it is an additional proof to me (which, I assure you, I did not want) of your having that true regard and affection for me which it is not only the wish but the ambition of my life to merit. Make yourself easy, my dear friend. Believe me, the world will soon be convinced that there not only is,[1] but never was, any ground for these reports, which of late have been so malevolently circulated. I have not seen you since the apostacy of Eden.[2] I think it ought to have the same effect upon all our friends that it has upon me, I mean the linking us closer to each other; and I believe you will easily believe these to be my sentiments; for you are perfectly well acquainted with my ways of thinking

[1] The Prince meant to say "there not only is *not*."

[2] Mr. Eden, afterwards Lord Auckland, seceded from the Whigs and joined the Tories at this time.

upon these (*sic*) sort of subjects. When I say my ways of thinking, I think I had better say my old maxim, which I ever intend to adhere to; I mean that of swimming or sinking with my friends. I have not time to add much more, except just to say that I believe I shall meet you at dinner at Bushey[1] on Tuesday; and to desire you to believe me at all times, my dear Charles, most affectionately yours,

"GEORGE P."

"CARLTON HOUSE,
Sunday morning, 2 *o'clock*,
December 11, 1785."

It is impossible to acquit the Prince of the intention to deceive Fox by this disingenuous epistle. Not only was his marriage already decided upon, but at the very hour he wrote arrangements for the ceremony were being hurriedly pressed forward. Perhaps the Prince, to whom sophistry and equivocation were second nature, justified himself by the quibble that as the marriage had not yet taken place he could still deny it by implication. For, be it noted, he makes no direct allusion to it, he only denies generally "these reports which of late have been so malevolently circulated." As a great many of the reports then current were false and exaggerated, the Prince was safe in denying them. Yet if Fox had studied the letter carefully then (as he doubtless studied it later) he would have seen that the Prince only evaded the point. He might also have read between the lines how embarrassing

[1] Lord North, who was a friend of both Fox and the Prince of Wales, was then living at Bushey. But there is no record that the dinner ever took place.

the subject was, for the Prince hastily escapes from it to "the apostacy of Eden," of which Fox had said nothing. He might have remembered, too, the Prince's notorious disregard of truth. But people are always ready to believe what they wish to believe, and Fox, having received a document which would not only exonerate him from any knowledge of the marriage, but would also enable him to deny it with authority if occasion arose, washed his hands of the business. The Prince, we may be sure, did not reopen the subject with Fox, nor did he mention this correspondence to Mrs. Fitzherbert, either then or at any future time. Had she seen Fox's letter to the Prince, coming from a man of his private reputation and political position, it might, even at the eleventh hour, have made her pause, for it would have shown her clearly not only the risks the Prince ran, but how she herself would be regarded by a censorious world.

One would have thought that Mrs. Fitzherbert's "male relatives," to whom Fox alludes, would have advised her against the marriage. But they had been won over to the Prince's side. Her two elder brothers, Watt and Jack Smythe, were hot-headed, impulsive youths, lately thrown upon the town. That they should have been over-persuaded by the Prince is not astonishing, especially as he vowed, by all that was holy, that he held their sister in highest honour. The sons of a Roman Catholic country squire, bred up in the seclusion then consequent on their faith, they were flattered, not unnaturally, by the notice of the most accomplished Prince of his age, and they were dazzled by the prospect held

out of future favours arising from the brilliant alliance. They neither realised, nor recked, the dangers of such a connection to their sister. But her uncle, Mr. Errington, should have been wiser. He was a man of the world, of means and of position: he had stood in the place of guardian to his niece since her father had become a hopeless invalid. He must have realised that, in the long run, such a union could not make for Mrs. Fitzherbert's happiness. He, a prominent Roman Catholic layman, must have known that the marriage was illegal, and that the illegality was complicated by the fact of his niece's religion. True, at first he remonstrated with her, but she would not listen; and when he had satisfied himself that there was to be a marriage ceremony fulfilling the requirements of his Church, he let things take their course. After all, his niece was a woman of twenty-nine years of age, who had been twice a widow. The family honour would be satisfied, for the rest she must take care of herself. He even lent himself to helping the marriage forward, for he promised Mrs. Fitzherbert that he and one of her brothers should be present at the ceremony to see that everything was done regularly and in due order.

Thus one difficulty was surmounted. But there remained another, not so easily overcome. A marriage such as Mrs. Fitzherbert insisted upon, a real marriage as opposed to the sham ceremony at Carlton House, involved not only witnesses, but an officiating clergyman. On the surface it would seem that the simplest way to satisfy her scruples would be for the ceremony to be performed

secretly by a Roman Catholic priest according to the rites of the Church of Rome, customary in what are known as "mixed marriages"—the marriage of a Roman Catholic with a baptized Christian, whether Greek or Anglican, or belonging to one of the Protestant sects. But according to the law of England at that time it was a serious offence for a Roman Catholic priest to celebrate a marriage between one of his faith and a member of the Church of England. Such marriages had to be performed by a clergyman of the Established Church if they were to be regarded as legal, and so the law continued until the second Relief Act of 1791. Until then, even marriages between two Roman Catholics had to be solemnised by a clergyman of the Established Church if they were to be legally binding. Mrs. Fitzherbert may therefore have stipulated for the presence of a clergyman of the Established Church, as an additional guarantee of the regularity (though not of the validity) of the marriage. But it is more probable that the Prince of Wales was averse to a secret marriage by a Roman Catholic priest, because, if it ever became known, such an act might be regarded by zealous Protestants as an act of communion with the Church of Rome on the part of the heir-apparent. It was therefore a *sine quâ non* that the marriage should be performed by a clergyman of the Church of England. The difficulty arose in finding one willing to perform the ceremony.

According to the Royal Marriage Act of 1772 a clergyman solemnising such a marriage would be committing an illegal act, and exposing himself to

the penalties of *premunire*, whatever they might be —in olden days death, then probably confiscation of property and transportation beyond the seas. Some clergymen might be found to argue that an Act of Parliament tampering with the marriage law was not binding on the Church, since it was carried without consulting Convocation. The Canon Law of the Church of England remained the same whatever Parliament might do, and thus a clergyman need have no scruple about performing the marriage ceremony. But the difficulty was complicated by the fact of the woman being a Roman Catholic and the man the heir-apparent to the throne. No conscientious clergyman of the Established Church, even the most liberal-minded, could upon reflection consider that, in the existing state of public feeling, it would be a wise or seemly thing for the Prince of Wales to set at defiance the law by which the House of Hanover succeeded to the English throne, and espouse a Roman Catholic.

There were of course unscrupulous and venal clergymen, and to these Colonel Gardner, the Prince's private secretary, to whom was entrusted the task of finding a clergyman, went first. He, true to his instinct, sought one of the type of the notorious Parson Keith and the Chaplain of the Fleet. He first made application to the Rev. Philip Rosenhagen, a disreputable military chaplain, who, being a clever and cunning scoundrel, had made his way into the Prince's society. Rosenhagen was a friend of Sir Philip Francis, and at his death in 1799 he left him his papers, which included certain letters relating to the marriage of the Prince

of Wales and Mrs Fitzherbert Lady Francis gives the following account of them —

"Colonel Gardner, the Prince s private secretary, writes the first letter, asking R to perform the ceremony R replies that it would be contrary to the law for him to do so, and, if done, would be productive of important, probably disastrous, consequences to the whole nation The Colonel answers that the Prince is aware of all that, but pledges himself to keep the matter a profound secret, and that the Prince will feel bound to reward R for such a proof of his attachment, as soon as the means are in his power Rosenhagen in reply says that he can trust implicitly the Prince s promise of secrecy, but he dare not betray the duty he owes to the Prince, by assisting in an affair that might bring such serious consequence to him Lady Francis says there were six letters, and she "believes Rosenhagen declined the business because no *specific* offer was made to him, and not from the motive stated in the letters, as he was daring and unscrupulous "[1]

Application was next made to a clergyman of a very different type, the Rev Johnes Knight, Rector of Welwyn in Hertfordshire, and who also, after the pluralist fashion of those days, held a city living "Parson Johnes,' as he was called, was a jovial divine of the old school He was a man of ample private means, a judge of good port, and a keen sportsman He was more of the squire than the parson, and though he was a scholar, and had the

[1] ' Memoirs of Sir Phil p Francis, K C B., with Correspondence and Journals 1867

advantages of wealth and good connections, yet he did not seek preferment in the Church, but preferred his independence, which he might have had to sacrifice on promotion. He had known the Prince of Wales "since he was a child in frocks,"[1] and was sincerely attached to him. Parson Johnes had a good many friends in high places. He often posted up to London to look after his city church, see his friends, and dine at his favourite haunts. On one of these occasions he paid a visit to Lord North at Bushey,[2] and it was while he was staying there that he was approached on the subject of marrying Mrs. Fitzherbert to the Prince. The story is best told in his own words. This is fortunately possible by giving the following letter which Mr. Johnes Knight wrote to his daughter Louisa, Lady Shelley, forty-five years later, four months after the death of George IV.:[3]—

The Reverend S. Johnes Knight to Lady Shelley.

"HENLEY HALL, *September* 28, 1830.

"MY DEAREST DAUGHTER,—To please you I will try to recollect my part in the transaction of the marriage of the late King George IV., when Prince of Wales, with Mrs. Fitzherbert.

"In the month of December 1785 I was staying

[1] *Hic et ubique*, by Sir William Fraser.

[2] Frederick North, second Earl of Guilford, better known as Lord North (1732–1792), sometime Prime Minister.

[3] The Rev. Johnes Knight lived to be nearly a hundred years of age, and his memory was excellent until within a few years of his death. The following letter was lent to me, for the purpose of dublication in this book, by a relative of his daughter, the late Lady Shelley. I give the letter, now published for the first time, in full.



MRS. FITZHERBERT

(After the Painting by RICHARD COSWAY, R.A.)

with Lord North at Bushey Park At that time there were only his own family with him We were playing at some round game on one of those evenings, when, about nine o'clock, a letter was brought to me from the Prince, in which he commanded me to come directly to a supper at Carlton House By Lord North's advice I instantly set off for London, and I believe his Lordship thought something more was intended for me than a mere supper, since Lady Glenbervie[1] told me her father desired they would never mention this letter of the Prince

"On my arrival at Carlton House, a letter was delivered to me from Edward Bouverie to say that the party was put off, and that the Prince expected to see me at an early hour the next morning It was now eleven o'clock, and I proceeded to the 'Mount' coffee house in Lower Grosvenor Street to get some supper Here I chanced to meet with Colonel Lake (created Lord Lake),[2] and we supped together In the course of conversation we talked of the Prince's attachment to Mrs Fitzherbert, and Lake said that he was almost certain the Prince intended to marry Mrs Fitzherbert, but that he *trusted* no clergyman would be found to perform the ceremony To this I cordially agreed, and I went home to Stratford Place, where my mother resided

"The next morning I was admitted into the

[1] Catherine Anna, daughter of Lord North, second Earl of Guilford (1760–1817) married first Baron Glenbervie

[2] Gerrard Lake, first Viscount Lake of Delhi (1744–1808) a distinguished soldier, afterwards Commander in Chief in India

Prince's dressing-room at Carlton House, and the Prince very soon came to me in his dressing-gown, appearing to have just got out of bed. He began by apologising for bringing me from Bushey Park, and then, in that persuasive language he knew so well how to employ, he detailed his long love for Mrs. Fitzherbert, the misery he had endured, the taunts he had received from the King in consequence of its having been suspected that the Prince, in the course of the last summer, had gone from Brighton to the French coast to visit Mrs. Fitzherbert. As a proof of his passion he then drew up his shirt, and showed a scar on his side, which the Prince said was caused by his falling on his sword that he might end his life with his hopeless love.[1] The Prince then spoke of his determination to repeal the Royal Marriage Act the instant he came to the Throne (which, by-the-bye, has never yet been done). The Prince in conclusion begged me, if I was really attached to him, to perform the marriage ceremony between him and Mrs. Fitzherbert. I used every argument I could think of to dissuade him from his purpose, but the more I argued against the marriage the more resolved the Prince seemed to become the husband of Mrs. Fitzherbert, and at last the Prince said, 'If you refuse to marry me, I must find out another clergyman who will.' This vehemence of his made me apprehensive that the Prince might get some clergyman to marry him for the chance of Church preferment, and then that this same divine for a larger bribe

[1] The scar which Mrs. Fitzherbert told Lord Stourton she had frequently seen.

would betray the Prince's secret to Mr. Pitt, who was then Prime Minister. This made me unable to resist the Prince's importunity, and I could not bear to see him so miserable; for at the period I am writing about, I esteemed the Prince, notwithstanding the difference of our rank, with all the warmth of equality in friendship.

"Dearest Louisa, do not blame me for this weakness; bear in mind I was young, and could not help being flattered by the attentions of a Prince who was one of the best arguers, in his own cause, I have ever known. His were not the regards of a common person; whoever he wished to gain he talked to so frankly, and on subjects most interesting to his hearer, and his tact was so nice that he never failed in the most minute circumstance which he supposed might captivate those with whom he, for the present hour, chose to associate. In a word, his manner, his earnestness, his devoted attachment to Mrs. Fitzherbert, his recklessness of the future, aided by one little but painful circumstance, namely a Prince imploring the consent of a subject, subdued me, and I agreed to marry him.

"This point being settled, the Prince said that on a certain day I should be walking between seven and eight o'clock in the evening at the upper end of Park Lane near Hereford Street,[1] where Mrs. Fitzherbert then lived, and that a person should be ready to introduce me into her house; I understood from the Prince that the only persons who would attend the wedding were *his friends* the

[1] Now known as Hereford Gardens, at the Oxford Street end of Park Street and Park Lane

Duke of Devonshire, and his Duchess, the sister of Lord Spencer. I then, after thanks in abundance showered on me, left Carlton House.

"I walked home full of the important business, and aware of the serious results I was bringing on myself, yet without the slightest inclination to draw back, when, just at the door, my last night's conversation with Lord Lake at the 'Mount' coffee house, flashed across my memory. I too late recollected that I had tacitly engaged not to marry the Prince to Mrs. Fitzherbert. This made me shrink from the imprudent step I had taken. In my devotedness to the Prince I had set at naught the legal penalties I must incur, but I could not divest myself of the dread of reproach from Lord Lake, for having broken my word. I had, and ever shall have, the highest opinion of the honour and integrity of Lord Lake. I know he was sincerely attached to the Prince, and I would not have forfeited Lord Lake's good opinion for all the world. I was now completely wretched, and, as a last resource, I immediately wrote the most affecting letter I could to the Prince, saying that before I saw him, I had promised to one person that nothing should induce me to marry the Prince to Mrs. Fitzherbert, that I had resolved to brave every punishment and loss I might sustain from having solemnised such marriage when persuaded to this by the Prince himself; but that I could not endure loss of honour. I mentioned, too, most truly, that during the interesting conversation I was honoured with by him on this subject I lost sight of the promise I had made, but that now, in my cool moments of re-

flection, it made me most unhappy, and I conjured him, by the strongest terms I could use, to allow me to decline the marriage ceremony.

"The Prince sent me directly a very kind answer releasing me from my engagement, and ordering me to wait on him at Colonel Gardner's house in Queen Street. Colonel Gardner naturally enough said, 'It was a pity I had not recollected my promise before I had allowed the Prince to confide in me.' I replied that I was very sorry for it, but that the agitation of such a question, and the Prince's importunity, had for the moment overcome me. We were now at Colonel Gardner's house; the Prince was already there. He shook hands with me, at the same time saying, 'if he had not let me off, I must inevitably have fled from England.' To this royal logic I joyfully assented, though for the life of me I never could make out how banishment must necessarily follow my resolution to conform to the law. In the course of conversation the Prince said he was sure he knew the friend who had bound me, meaning Lord North, but without mentioning his name. I replied 'that H.R.H. must pardon me, but that I never could tell who that friend was.' We then separated.

"I instantly destroyed the Prince's letters, and never till the death of George IV. mentioned the business to any one. Neither did I tell Lord Lake on his return from India, when the tale was out of date, what I had suffered not to lose his friendship.

"I am firmly convinced that the Prince *was* married to Mrs. Fitzherbert, and that all the English Roman Catholics considered her as the legal wife of

George IV. I am inclined to think that when the Prince told Mrs. Fitzherbert that I declined marrying him to her, that he forgot to tell her my strict sense of honour alone prevented my performing the ceremony. I can speak nothing but what is as honourable as is true of that ill-used Lady. In her long intercourse with the Prince of Wales, she never spoke ill of any human being. She never was versed in the low art of courtly detraction and calumny, she never enriched herself, her relations or friends, by imposing on confiding Royalty; she never conspired with any low-born engine (*sic*) to keep the distinguished Ruler of England inclosed in a magic circle, remote from the affections of his people. But Mrs. Fitzherbert was truly and honestly attached to her Royal Husband, and always intent on his showing himself frequently among those who were destined to be his subjects. Mrs. Fitzherbert has lived honoured and respected,[1] without guile, without deceit, and without that most odious vice of avarice. Happy had it been for this forsaken Lady, had she never been the object of princely love, and a thousand times happier had it been for the Prince, had he never deserted her for the dearly-bought smiles of her unworthy successor.

"My dear daughter, you have now all I ever remember of this matter, for I write from memory only, having always thought it base to commit to writing the conversations of the day. I have told you what happened forty-five years ago.

"Adieu, dearest; I hope this will give you half as

[1] It must be remembered that she was still living when this letter was written.

much pleasure in [illegible]
affectionate Father [illegible]
[illegible]

Both the [illegible]
fully approached [illegible]
neither of [illegible]
gave the [illegible]
rumour was [illegible]
was very near the [illegible]
Fitzherbert to London [illegible]
known, and the [illegible]
struction upon [illegible]
and in the drawing-rooms [illegible]
was talked of [illegible]
the terms on which [illegible]
rendered to the [illegible]
discussed. Had she [illegible]
had she not? [illegible]
world of fashion. [illegible]
that she [illegible]
minded, [illegible]
The discussion [illegible]
long before [illegible]
already taken place [illegible]
ing forms [illegible]

CHAPTER VI

THE MARRIAGE

(1785)

At last a clergyman of the Church of England was found willing to perform the marriage ceremony. The Rev. Robert Burt, a young curate, who had been recently admitted to priest's orders, consented to run the risk, and to marry the Prince of Wales to Mrs. Fitzherbert in return for £500 paid down and the promise of future preferment.

All obstacles being thus removed, the marriage took place about six o'clock in the evening of December 15, 1785, at Mrs. Fitzherbert's town house in Park Street, Park Lane.[1] The ceremony was duly performed according to the rites of the Church of England by an ordained priest of that Church. Lord Stourton says that "she was married according to the rites of the Catholic Church ... no Roman Catholic priest officiating,"[2]—a confusion

[1] This house, which was at the upper end of Park Street, close to Oxford Street, near what is now known as Hereford Gardens, has been pulled down. It was standing until within a comparatively recent date. Lady Constance Leslie, a daughter of Mrs. Fitzherbert's adopted daughter, the Hon. Mrs. George Dawson Damer, remembers her father pointing it out to her as "the house where Mrs. Fitzherbert married George IV." It was the house left to Mrs. Fitzherbert by her second husband.

[2] Langdale, *op. cit.*

of language which does not mean that the Roman ritual was followed, but that such forms were observed as are recognised by the Church of Rome to constitute a valid marriage; the Anglican rite, performed by an Anglican clergyman, in the presence of witnesses, is deemed sufficient.

Mrs. Fitzherbert's uncle, Henry Errington, gave his niece away, and he and her brother, Jack Smythe, acted as witnesses The greatest secrecy was observed The Prince came on foot from Carlton House after dusk, attended only, it is said, by Mr. Orlando Bridgeman.[1] Mrs. Fitzherbert, with her uncle and brother and the officiating clergyman, had already assembled in the drawing-room, and when the Prince arrived the doors of the room were locked, the clergyman put on his surplice, and began the service according to "The Form of Solemnisation of Matrimony in the Book of Common Prayer." Mr. Bridgeman does not appear to have been actually present at the marriage; he was probably on guard outside the door of the room, perhaps outside the door of the house, to give

[1] Orlando Bridgeman (1762–1825) was the eldest son of Sir Henry Bridgeman, Bart., afterwards created first Baron Bradford Orlando, who was then twenty three years of age, was M P for Wigan He succeeded his father in 1800, and in 1815 was created first Earl of Bradford He was a Shropshire man, a friend of the Smythe family, and always a friend of the Prince of Wales His presence on this occasion is therefore quite likely, though he was not one of the witnesses of the marriage In addition to Mr Bridgeman some say that General Keppel, and others the Duke of Bedford, were present at the marriage as friends of the Prince of Wales But this is unlikely Not even Colonel Gardner, who had found the clergymen and arranged all the details of the ceremony, was present; the Prince not wishing to compromise any of his servants or friends

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alarm in case of need. For it must be remembered this was the first clandestine marriage of a prince of the blood since the passing of the Royal Marriage Act, and if the King or the Government had had any hint of what was going on, the ceremony would have been prevented, if necessary by force. But it passed off without interruption. No one alleged any impediment why these two should "not be coupled together in matrimony." Before a clergyman of the Church of England, and in the presence of witnesses, George Prince of Wales and Maria Fitzherbert knelt side by side and repeated the vows that made them man and wife. The priest joined their hands and pronounced over them the solemn words, "*Those whom God hath joined together let no man put asunder.*"

When the service was concluded, the Prince of Wales wrote out a certificate of marriage with his own hand and signed it. Mrs. Fitzherbert also signed it, and the two witnesses added their names —John Smythe and Henry Errington. This certificate (her marriage lines) was given into the keeping of Mrs. Fitzherbert. Many years later the witnesses' signatures were cut out of the certificate in a moment of panic at their earnest request "by Mrs. Fitzherbert herself, with her own scissors, to save them from the peril of the law."[1] But the document thus mutilated was always kept by Mrs. Fitzherbert, and in 1833 (under circumstances which will be related more fully later) it was placed by her, with other papers necessary to prove her marriage,

[1] Langdale, *op. cit.*

in Messrs. Coutts's Bank The certificate[1] runs as follows:—

We, the undersigned, do witness y^t George Augustus Frederick, Prince of Wales, was married unto Maria Fitzherbert, this 15^th of December 1785

Witnesses' names cut out

GEORGE P.

MARIA FITZHERBERT.

Mrs Fitzherbert soon regretted her hasty act in cutting out the witnesses' names She realised that it weakened the value of the document as evidence, and to supply the defect she kept a letter which the Prince wrote to her nearly fourteen years after their marriage In this letter, dated from Windsor Castle, June 11, 1799, he said, speaking of their marriage:—

[1] I am allowed to publish the certificate here by gracious permission of His Majesty the King It is the paper marked "No 2" on the list given by Langdale (*op cit* p 87), and was until recently kept at Messrs Coutts's Bank. It has now been removed, with the other Fitzherbert papers, to the private archives at Windsor Castle by command of His Majesty Mr Langdale, who had never seen the document, gives the wrong date to the marriage, December 21, 1785 It took place on December 15, 1785 The tail of the "g" of Mr Errington's signature can be seen

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"*Thank God my witnesses are living, your uncle and your brother, besides Harris* [Lord Malmesbury], *whom I shall call upon as having been informed by me of every, even the minutest, circumstance of our marriage.*"[1]

It will be seen that everything connected with the ceremony was carried out in due order. The Prince was quite as anxious as Mrs. Fitzherbert that this should be so—that nothing should be wanting which could make her his wife according to God's law.

It is impossible to believe that the young Prince was not absolutely sincere. Despite his youthful follies he was far from being an irreligious man. He knew that to the woman he loved and honoured the marriage was a real one; to her marriage was a sacrament, and the vows she uttered were binding on her conscience and life. There is no reason to believe that the Prince regarded the marriage in a different light, or to doubt that he meant his vows to be equally binding on him. There is abundant evidence to prove that despite the wrong he did her in after years, she was always in his heart of hearts his "only real and true wife."

The Prince could never make her Princess of Wales, she could never share with him his

[1] This extract from the Prince's letter is published here by gracious permission of His Majesty the King. This document is marked "5" on the list given by Langdale (*op. cit.* p. 87): "Letter from the late King relating to the Marriage." Mrs. Fitzherbert told Lord Stourton who her witnesses were, and this letter corroborates her statement. It also goes to show that Orlando Bridgeman was not actually present at the ceremony. The officiating clergyman is not mentioned by the Prince; he had died in 1791.



GEORGE PRINCE OF WALES AND MRS FITZHERBERT

(*After Miniatures by* RICHARD COSWAY R A *now in possession of the* EARL OF PORTARLINGTON
From a Photograph by MISS HICKS BEACH)

throne, their children (if there were any) could never succeed to the crown of England, but he could and did make her his wife, according to the law of the Church Catholic throughout the world, though not according to the law of the British Parliament. There was no deception in this, for Mrs. Fitzherbert knew the existing state of the civil law as well as he. By this marriage he fulfilled the only stipulation she demanded, for the rest she trusted wholly to his honour. That she trusted to a broken reed is a matter of history, yet we refuse to believe that at the time of his marriage he acted in bad faith, or ever (even in after years) willingly wronged her. What happened later does not necessarily impair his sincerity of purpose at the time of his marriage. He was full of good intentions. If she had made sacrifices, and they were great, let it not be forgotten that he made sacrifices too. For he knew that if this union ever became known, the consequences might be most serious to him. It says much for his trust in the woman he married, as well as his love for her, that he placed in her hands such a tremendous power for harm against him as their marriage certificate. His trust was not misplaced, for she was of a generous and noble nature, incapable of petty meanness or revenge. She solemnly promised that she would never publish the fact of the marriage during his lifetime without his consent, and to that promise she adhered in after years through good report and evil, despite the grossest attacks on her character, though she was publicly forsworn in Parliament, and privately repudiated by her husband.

She held all the documentary proofs of her marriage; she could have silenced her calumniators with a word; but the proofs were never produced, the word was never spoken. Her conscience was clear to herself, she was void of offence before God, and she let the world say what it would. The result justified her wisdom. Such was the uprightness of her character that silence proved her most effectual weapon, and won for her the belief and respect of honourable men and women.

There remains to be considered the clergyman who performed the marriage ceremony, the Rev. Robert Burt. The Prince of Wales faithfully kept his promise to give him preferment. In addition to the £500 paid down, he appointed him one of his domestic chaplains, and obtained for him the comfortable living of Twickenham (the parish in which Mrs. Fitzherbert's villa was situated). On the strength of these good things Mr. Burt married, and before long had a growing family. His ambitions grew with his needs; for his gratitude was of the kind which has a keen sense of favours to come. Notwithstanding all that the Prince had done for him, we find him, six years after the marriage, writing the following letter, which gives a curious insight into the character of the man :—

"*The Reverend Robert Burt to H.R.H. the Prince of Wales.*

"TWICKENHAM VICARAGE,
February 25, 1791.

"SIR,—I most humbly beg to notify to Your Royal Highness the death of Dr. Tarrant, Dean of

Peterborough, Rector of St. George's, Bloomsbury, and Prebendary of Rochester. The above preferments being all in the gift of the Crown, I have thought it my duty to announce them accordingly to Your Royal Highness. The Prebend of Rochester, being the least and most insignificant in value, I take the liberty to mention it *particularly* to Your Royal Highness, and to solicit most humbly and earnestly your influence and interposition with the Lord Chancellor to obtain it for me. Your Royal Highness may be assured that I should not have made the present application was I not in a situation to require your gracious aid and protection, and at the same time most sensible how ready the Lord Chancellor is upon all occasions to testify his respect and deference to Your Royal Highness by paying due attention to your recommendations: of this I have already been frequently apprised without having occasion to refer to my own particular case, when Your Royal Highness did me the honour last year to have my name mentioned to the Lord Chancellor. It can never be in my power to testify my gratitude for the indulgences already conferred on me by Your Royal Highness, nor am I able in any degree to express them as my heart would dictate. I can only affirm that I shall ever retain the liveliest sense of my obligations to you, and continually pray for Your Royal Highness's health and happiness as long as I have breath. From Your Royal Highness's most gracious assurance of protection and patronage whenever an opportunity should offer, I have every reason to flatter myself with success from

the strength and validity of Your Royal recommendation.

"Let me once more therefore beg leave to solicit Your Royal Highness's interposition on my behalf, and to entreat your assistance.

"In the meanwhile I have the honour to be, Sir, your Royal Highness's most dutiful and faithful servant,

"ROBERT BURT."

The Prince gave this letter to Mrs. Fitzherbert, who appended to it the following memorandum in her own handwriting:—

"*The writer of this letter, the Rev. Mr. Burt, is the clergyman that performed the ceremony of marriage of H.R.H. the Prince, and of Mrs. Fitzherbert.*

(*Signed*)
"MARIA FITZHERBERT."

The clergyman's letter, with the above memorandum written on the back, was kept by Mrs. Fitzherbert among her private papers, and in 1833 she placed it, with other documents, at Coutts's Bank.[1] It forms the last link of the chain of

[1] I am allowed to publish the letter and memorandum here by gracious permission of His Majesty the King. This document is No. 5 on the list given by Langdale (*op. cit.* p. 87): "Memorandum written by Mrs. Fitzherbert, attached to a letter written by the clergyman who performed the marriage ceremony."

This document has served as a pretext for several impostors to declare that they were the children (or descendants of the children) of the illegal marriage of George IV. and Mrs. Fitzherbert. They declared that the proofs of their paternity were to be found in the Fitzherbert papers at Coutts's Bank, more particularly in this docu-

evidence which proves beyond all doubt the fact that a ceremony of marriage took place between George, Prince of Wales, and Maria Fitzherbert.

It may be added that Mr. Burt did not obtain the coveted preferment. Perhaps the Prince of Wales felt that he had done enough for him, and that it was time to make a stand. Perhaps he had not the power, for at the time the application was made (1791) the Prince was much out of favour with the King and the Government, and he had no influence even in the smallest matters. In any case the Prince was spared further annoyance from this importunate cleric. Mr. Burt died some eight months after he had written this letter, on October 17, 1791, at the age of thirty-one. He is said to have confessed on his deathbed[1] that he had performed the marriage between the Prince of Wales and Mrs. Fitzherbert. Mr. Burt's name, however, was never mentioned in the connection, and it was believed until recently that Mr. Johnes Knight had been the officiating clergyman. At the time of the marriage it was generally asserted that the ceremony had been performed by a Roman Catholic priest, according to the rites of the Church of Rome.

ment, and for that reason the papers were never published. The publication of the document *in full* now is a convincing proof of the falsehood of their statements, which had not the slightest foundation in fact. Neither by her first or second marriage, nor by her third marriage with George, Prince of Wales, had Mrs Fitzherbert any children.

[1] "Diary of Lord Colchester," vol i. p 68

CHAPTER VII[1]

THE VALIDITY OF THE MARRIAGE

REFERENCE has been made to the Royal Marriage Act of 1772, of which Act the Prince of Wales's marriage to Mrs. Fitzherbert was a flagrant violation. It will be well, therefore, to review briefly the provisions of that Act, and the causes which led to its passing into law. We will then pass to other considerations which affected this marriage in its civil and religious aspect.

The Royal Marriage Act owed its origin to the clandestine marriages of George III.'s two brothers, the Duke of Gloucester and the Duke of Cumberland, to English subjects without the consent of the King.

The first of these marriages, though it was not declared until later than the second, was that of the Duke of Gloucester[2] to the Dowager Countess Waldegrave, who by birth was the illegitimate daughter of Sir Edward Walpole (eldest son of the great Minister, and brother of Horace Walpole) by Mary Clement, a milliner's apprentice. Lady

[1] This chapter is an interpolation dealing with the legality and validity of the marriage, and does not affect the narrative. The word "validity" is used in reference to the Canon Law, and "legality" in connection with the Civil Law.

[2] William Henry, first Duke of Gloucester, third son of Frederick Prince of Wales (1743–1805).

Waldegrave was the second of the three beautiful daughters born of this connection, Laura, Maria, and Charlotte. Their paternity was fully acknowledged by their father, who gave them his name, and intended to have married the mother, but was prevented by her early death. His daughters grew up under his immediate care, and he gave them every advantage of wealth and education. They were received everywhere, except at Court, and all three made good marriages. Laura married the Rev. the Hon. Frederick Keppel, brother of the Earl of Albemarle, who subsequently became Bishop of Exeter; Maria, James, Earl Waldegrave; and Charlotte, Lord Huntingtower, afterwards Earl of Dysart. Lord Waldegrave, who was old enough to be Maria's father, died a few years after the marriage, leaving his widow with three daughters;[1] they had no son Lady Waldegrave was rich and beautiful, highly accomplished, very dignified, and most correct in her conduct and principles. Many admirers were at her feet, but she rejected them all, and to the astonishment of her friends engaged in a dalliance with the unattractive Duke of Gloucester. The Duke fell in love with the young widow when he was only nineteen, and despite all obstacles and remonstrances persisted in his suit for two or three years

[1] The Waldegrave sisters were famous for their beauty. The eldest, Elizabeth Laura, married her first cousin, George, Earl Waldegrave The second, Charlotte Maria, married the Earl of Euston, afterwards Duke of Grafton The third, Anne Horatia, married Admiral Lord Hugh Seymour, by whom she had a large family. The youngest of her children, Mary Seymour, was afterwards adopted by Mrs Fitzherbert. Of this we shall have occasion to speak later.

At last Lady Waldegrave yielded to the importunities of her royal lover, and they were secretly married, without witnesses, in the drawing-room of Lady Waldegrave's town house, by her domestic chaplain, on September 6, 1766. The marriage was not declared; they did not live in the same house, and to outward semblance things went on much as before, though the lady's liveries and establishment became semi-royal. The Duke visited her daily, and attended her everywhere in public, when he treated her with the most profound respect. Some said they were married, for it seemed unlikely that an earl's widow of virtue and pride would become the mistress of a prince of the blood. Others said they were not, and they held it impossible, owing to her illegitimacy, that Lady Waldegrave could ever be acknowledged as the sister-in-law of the reigning Sovereign. So matters went on for six years after the secret marriage, and then, in June 1772, in consequence of the passing of the Royal Marriage Act (brought about by the marriage of the Duke of Cumberland), the Duke of Gloucester formally communicated the fact of his marriage to the King. The King, though he had suspected the truth, was greatly annoyed at its being confirmed. He deputed the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Lord Chancellor, and the Bishop of London to inquire into the legality of the marriage, as it had taken place without witnesses. The Duke said that if there were any doubt cast upon the marriage he would marry the Duchess again, but the committee reported that they were satisfied with its legality. The King therefore acknowledged



THE DUCHESS OF GLOUCESTER

(*née* WALPOLE)

the marriage, but for a long time he refused to be reconciled to his brother, and spoke of him with sorrow, and of his wife with bitterness. "I never can," he writes, "think of placing her in a situation to answer her extreme pride and vanity."[1] Time, however, the submissive attitude of the Duke, and the irreproachable conduct of the Duchess, worked a change. They lived in exile for years, but when at last they returned to England the King received them at court, and thereafter showed the greatest kindness to them, and to their two children, Prince William Frederick, and the Princess Sophia of Gloucester.[2]

The second marriage was that of the King's youngest brother, the Duke of Cumberland,[3] to Anne, daughter of Lord Irnham (afterwards Earl of Carhampton), the widow of a Derbyshire squire, Andrew Horton of Catton. This marriage, though it took place subsequently to that of the Duke of Gloucester, was declared first. The Duchess of Cumberland was very different to the Duchess of Gloucester. She was well born, young and beautiful, but lacked the Duchess of Gloucester's pride and high character. She was a born *intrigante* and devoted to a life of pleasure. Her appearance and her friends were what is called "fast," but nothing

[1] Brougham's "Statesmen of the Time of George III.," ed 1858

[2] Prince William Frederick succeeded his father as second Duke of Gloucester in 1805 He m[illegible] fourth daughter of George II[illegible] The Duke died in 1834, th[illegible] Matilda of Gloucester never married She was one of the god mothers, by proxy, of his present Majesty, King Edward VII

[3] Henry Frederick, Duke of Cumberland (1745–1790), fourth son of Frederick, Prince of Wales

definite was ever alleged against her virtue. Her marriage to the Duke of Cumberland took place on October 2, 1771, at the lady's house in Hertford Street, Mayfair.[1] The marriage was in regular order, and there was little or no concealment. The newly-wedded pair went to France for their hóneymoon, and the Duke wrote from Calais and announced his marriage to the King as though it were a matter of course. George III. was greatly incensed, not only at the marriage, but at the manner in which his brother had thought fit to make it known to him. He sent an intimation to the foreign ambassadors and ministers that he would be obliged if they would abstain from visiting Cumberland House. The Lord Chamberlain sent out a notice to the fashionable world, to the effect that all those who waited on the Duke and Duchess of Cumberland would no longer be received at Court. This rule became practically a dead-letter, for though the King never forgave his brother and never received the Duchess, he could not prevent people from visiting them. The Prince of Wales was one of the greatest offenders in this respect, for he was always at Cumberland House, and society followed his lead. The Duke and Duchess of Cumberland retaliated by setting the King at defiance. They knew, despite all the Sovereign could say or do, their marriage was perfectly legal, and their children (if they had any) came within the line of succession to the throne.[2] The King knew this too, and was

[1] The proofs of the marriage, obtained by order of the King in 1773, are preserved in the Privy Council Office.

[2] There was no issue from the marriage.

determined to prevent such marriages in future. He took counsel with his Ministers forthwith, and the result was the Royal Marriage Act of 1772.

The Duke of Cumberland's marriage was thus the immediate cause of the Royal Marriage Act, but there were other reasons as well. George III., who was a despot where his family were concerned, had long contemplated some such measure. Though he was the first of our Hanoverian Kings to be born and bred in England, he had inherited on this point the narrow views of his German mother, who ranked the pettiest prince of Germany above the noblest of England's dukes. It was an article of faith with her that suitable brides for her sons were only to be found in Germany. George III. was a firm believer in this anti-English policy. He was a conscientious man, and not one who would shrink from his convictions; he had himself done violence to his affections in not marrying the beautiful Lady Sarah Lennox, whom he loved. True to his theory, he had sent to Germany for his bride, and there had come to him Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz.

Apart from this German bias it must be admitted that there was much to be said on the King's side. His brothers, doubtless, might have found suitable consorts among the daughters of the English nobility, but such alliances as the clandestine marriages of the Dukes of Gloucester and Cumberland did not add to the prestige of the royal house. The King had a numerous family growing up of sons and daughters, and it was clearly desirable that he should have the power to prevent them from contracting imprudent marriages at an early age. Any father

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of a family should have such power, how much more then the King of England. But George III. aimed at far more than reasonable parental authority. He wished to be invested with despotic power, and to be able to forbid the marriages of his sons and daughters, and of all his relatives (descendants of George II.), not only until a fixed age but for all time. This is clearly shown by the message he sent to Parliament after the Duke of Cumberland's marriage. He stated that the right of approving of all marriages in the royal family had ever belonged to the King as a matter of public weal, and he recommended Parliament to remedy the defect in the laws forthwith.

In consequence of the royal message, on February 17, 1772, a Bill was brought into Parliament to give the King the authority he desired, entitled "An Act for the better regulating of the future Marriages of the Royal Family." The Bill was strongly opposed in all its stages as despotic and un-English. In the House of Lords, Lord Rockingham opposed it on the supposition that the royal family might in time become so numerous as to include many thousand individuals—a not unlikely supposition, for Queen Charlotte had already presented her husband with many children, and seemed likely to present him with as many more. Lord Camden deprecated the power to annul a marriage contracted between persons who had attained their majority, that is, twenty-one years. Lord Radnor spoke against the Bill because it did not guard against what he considered to be a greater danger—the improper marriages of Princes on the throne. The King

might marry whom he would [illegible] children only whom he pleased. [illegible] was the opposition in [illegible] The Bill was debated with [illegible] declared that the [illegible] and likely to bring upon the [illegible] confusion: he would [illegible] opposition in every [illegible] discussion was continued [illegible] was protracted until [illegible] thing in those days. [illegible] ceeded in carrying the [illegible]

The Bill was again [illegible] going into Committee. [illegible] able speech against it. [illegible] the claim put forward by the Crown. [illegible] delicately to the recent marriage [illegible] Cumberland (the Duke of [illegible] had not then been declared, [illegible] instances in which [illegible] England had married [illegible] not only to their own [illegible] of the nation. [illegible] Queen Anne as two of England's [illegible] were children of such marriages [illegible] posed to condemn. He declared [illegible] be "un-English and [illegible] and contrary to the law of God [illegible] Chatham, who was unable to be present [illegible] illness, wrote a letter, which was [illegible] of debate, strongly condemning [illegible] scribed it as "new-fangled," and [illegible] to the King as "wanton and [illegible]

most strenuous opposition, however, only succeeded in effecting some modifications in the Bill. It was forced through Parliament, and received the Royal Assent in March 1772. In its final form it ran as follows:[1]—

"As His Majesty, from His Paternal Affection to His Family, and His Royal Concern for the future Welfare of His People, and the Honour and Dignity of His Crown, was graciously pleased to recommend to His Parliament to take into their serious consideration, Whether it might not be expedient to supply the Defect of the Laws now in being; and by some new Provision, more effectually to guard the Descendants of George II. (other than the Issue of Princesses who have married, or may hereafter marry, into foreign Families) from marrying without the Approbation of His Majesty, His Heirs, &c. first obtained: be it enacted—

"That no Descendant of the Body of His late Majesty King George II., Male or Female (other than the Issue of Princesses who have married, or may hereafter marry, into foreign Families), shall be capable of contracting Matrimony without the previous Consent of His Majesty, His Heirs, &c., signified under the Great Seal, and declared in Council (which Consent, to preserve the Memory thereof, is hereby directed to be set out in the Licence and Register of Marriage, and to be entered in the Books of the Privy Council); and that every Marriage or Matrimonial Contract of

1 "An Abstract of an Act for the better regulating the Future Marriages of the Royal Family." Georgii III., A.D. 1772.

any such Descendant, without such Consent first obtained, shall be void.

"In case such Descendant of George II., being above the age of 25 Years, shall persist in the Resolution to contract a Marriage disapproved of by the King, His Heirs, &c., that then such Descendant, upon giving Notice to the King's Privy Council, which Notice is hereby directed to be entered in the Books thereof, may, at any Time from the Expiration of Twelve Calendar Months after such notice given as aforesaid, contract such Marriage; and such Marriage with the Person before proposed, and rejected, may be duly solemnised, without the previous Consent of His Majesty, or Successors; and shall be good unless both Houses of Parliament shall, before the Expiration of the said Twelve Months, expressly declare their Disapprobation thereof.

"Every person who shall wilfully presume to solemnise, or to assist, or to be present at the Celebration of any Marriage with any such Descendant, or at his or her making any Matrimonial Contract, without such Consent as aforesaid first obtained, except in the case above mentioned, shall, being duly convicted thereof, suffer the Penalties ordained by the Statute of Provision and Premunire made 16 Rich. II."[1]

The powers of the Sovereign, it will be seen, are limited in this Act. The age limit is raised from twenty-one to twenty-five years (no excessive limit), after that the ultimate appeal is to Parliament. If Parliament, being duly notified, does not forbid the

[1] "Public General Acts." 12 George III.

marriage in dispute within twelve months, the King's objection can be over-ruled and the marriage duly solemnised. On the other hand, the scope of the Bill includes not only the Sovereign's children and those in direct succession to the throne, but all members of the royal family, even the most remote, other than the issue of British princesses who have married into foreign families. The powers given are therefore very extensive; the happiness of many is placed in the hands of the Sovereign, and it depends chiefly upon him whether the Act is administered with wisdom and judgment, or whether it degenerates into an instrument of tyranny. The position of the Sovereign in this matter is a delicate and difficult one. Some such Act as the Royal Marriage Act is necessary, and it may be further contended in its favour that, though this one has been in existence for over a century, it has always been administered with discretion;[1] except, perhaps, in one or two instances during the reign of George III. It was this lack of judgment on the part of George III. which probably caused the Act to recoil upon the domestic happiness of some of his children, and ultimately on himself. Into these cases it would serve no good purpose to enter here.

There is a vulgar error that the Royal Marriage Act forbids marriages between princes and princesses of the blood and persons other than royal, but it does nothing of the kind. The consent of

[1] In proof of this contention it may be stated that no appeal to Parliament against the Sovereign's decision has ever been made by any prince or princess of the blood royal since the passing of the Act.

the Sovereign is absolutely necessary up to the age of twenty-five, whether the intended marriage be with a royal personage or not And with the Sovereign's consent the marriage of a prince or princess of the blood royal with a subject, even with a commoner, would be perfectly legal The words "even with a commoner need some explanation, for there are many English commoners of royal descent—descended legitimately from our Plantagenet and Tudor kings In England there has never been (at least until recently) that exaggerated value of titles, *quâ* titles, which obtains in many European countries, where almost every one of any position is possessed of some high sounding prefix often signifying little or nothing In England there are many commoners of ancient lineage who can point to a more distinguished descent than many a peer[1] With the consent of the Sovereign the Royal Marriage Act offers no obstacle to the marriage of such an one to any member of the royal family, who, subject to this condition is free to wed with any English subject, noble, gentle or simple

Still the Act was intensely unpopular, it was regarded as un English, and the opposition to it lasted long after it became law By many it was thought to be a short lived measure, one that would be repealed, or fall into desuetude, on the death of George III, and one which even during his lifetime could be evaded with impunity The Prince of Wales openly said that he would repeal the Act when he came

[1] Mrs Fitzherbert is a case in point She was better born and better connected than many a peeress though the table of precedence gave her no place.

to the throne, and as the whole Whig party were opposed to it, it was thought that even a change of Government would probably result in modifying its provisions. It was said that it was contrary to the common law of England, and would break down at the first test; the penalties of *premunire* were so vague as to be practically non-existent. It is possible that if the Royal Marriage Act had been the only obstacle, the marriage of Mrs. Fitzherbert to the Prince of Wales would have been acknowledged, and she would have been recognised, not as Princess of Wales (that, of course, was impossible), but as the wife of her husband.

There existed a far more serious difficulty. The fact that she was a Roman Catholic constituted an almost insuperable obstacle to the avowal of the marriage. According to Section IX. of the Act of 1689—"An Act for declaring the rights and liberties of the subject and settling the succession of the Crown"—the Prince's marriage to a Roman Catholic (if regular) would have endangered his succession to the throne. The clause is sufficiently explicit:

"And whereas it hath been found by experience that it is inconsistent with the safety and welfare of this Protestant Kingdom to be governed by a Popish Prince, or any King or Queen marrying a Papist, the said Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons, do further pray that it may be enacted, that all and every person and persons that is, are, or shall be reconciled to, or shall hold communion with, the See or Church of Rome, or shall profess the Popish religion, *or shall marry a Papist*, shall be excluded and be for ever incapable to inherit,

possess, or enjoy the Crown and Government of this realm, and Ireland, and the dominions thereunto belonging, or any part of the same, or to have, use, or exercise any regal power, authority, or jurisdiction within the same; and in all and every such case or cases the people of these realms shall be and are hereby absolved of their allegiance; and the said Crown and Government shall from time to time descend to, and be enjoyed by, such person or persons, being Protestants, as should have inherited and enjoyed the same in case the said person or persons so reconciled, holding communion, or professing, or marrying aforesaid, were naturally dead."

Now Mrs. Fitzherbert was a Roman Catholic born and bred, and one who openly professed the principles of her religion. Therefore at first sight it would seem that the Prince of Wales, in marrying her, had, by violating the clause of the Act which placed his family on the throne, forfeited his right to inherit the Crown as though, in the words of the Act, he were "naturally dead," and the succession would pass to his next brother Frederick, Duke of York. The fact that the marriage was performed by a clergyman of the Established Church according to the rites of the Church of England made no difference, for Mrs. Fitzherbert did not abjure her religion thereby. But, argued the Prince's friends (and doubtless the Prince himself), the Prince did not and could not *legally* marry Mrs. Fitzherbert because of the operation of the Royal Marriage Act of 1772, which declared such marriages to be null and void in law. That these apologists were not sure of their ground is shown by the great care

which was taken to keep the marriage secret at the time; and when, later, some part of the truth leaked out, they felt bound to deny not only the marriage, but that any form or ceremony had taken place at all. It is a nice point of law how far the subsequent Royal Marriage Act affected this clause in the Act of Settlement, and it is one on which great constitutional lawyers differ. According to Sir Arthur Pigott the marriage was irregular but valid, and being a marriage between the heir-apparent and a Roman Catholic, operated by the provisions of the Act of Settlement to a total defeasance of the Crown.

Lord Brougham also, who had considered the subject well, was of the opinion that the plea put forward by the friends of the Prince of Wales, that the marriage was illegal, and therefore the Act of Settlement was not violated, could not be maintained. He says, "It was in discussing this question ever contended, that the marriage being illegal, as having been contracted without the royal assent, which the Royal Marriage Act requires, there could be no forfeiture, the ceremony being a mere nullity; but all lawyers agree in that acts of various kinds, both by the laws of England and Scotland, are followed by forfeiture of the party's rights who commits the acts as if he were naturally dead, and by the succession of the King's heir, the forfeiture being denounced in order to deter from even the attempt to do the thing forbidden, how ineffectual soever that thing might be in itself for any purpose save the incurring the penalty. Indeed the case of bigamy is precisely of this



THE DUCHESS OF CUMBERLAND
(*née* LUTTRELL)
(*After the Painting by* RICHARD COSWAY, R.A.)

description, the second wife has no rights whatever, her marriage is a nullity, but she and her pretended husband incur the penalty of felony'[1]

On the other hand, as Brougham himself shows, the Act of Settlement, which fixes the penalty of the Crown's forfeiture on any member of the royal family who marries a Roman Catholic, is framed, like most Acts of Parliament, in a careless and clumsy manner He says "No means of carrying it into effect are provided, no declaration of the powers by whom the fact is to be ascertained is made, by what authority the subject is to be absolved from his allegiance, and that allegiance transferred from one to another It is probable that if the circumstance occurred the two Houses of Parliament would from the necessity of the case be required to interpose, as in the two precedents of 1788 and 1811 of the Regency arising from the illness of George III, but the statute is altogether silent, and the whole enactment assumed the form of a menace or denunciation Nevertheless its meaning is clear, the intention is to prevent a Roman Catholic marriage, and to forfeit all rank and title whatever of any King or heir to the throne contracting such a marriage'[2]

But it is idle to speculate what would have happened if the fact that the Prince of Wales had gone through the marriage ceremony with a Roman Catholic had been publicly proclaimed, for when the question arose later the marriage was formally denied in Parliament on two occasions in the most uncompromising terms Otherwise Parliament

[1] Lord Brougham's Memoirs. [2] Brougham, op cit

would probably have been forced to intervene, but the necessity of any action being taken would have had to be made very clear, and what the result of such action might have been it is impossible to say. Something would depend upon the attitude of the next heir to the Crown; and if he were hostile, or covetous of power, he could do much to make the position of the elder brother exceedingly uncomfortable. But no such danger was to be apprehended from the Duke of York. He was devoted to the Prince of Wales (and in after years also to Mrs. Fitzherbert), and he always declared that he would never do anything to embarrass his brother, and to this principle he loyally adhered throughout his life. The real danger, if the truth ever became known, lay in the extreme Protestant party in England and Scotland (what in our day would be called the "Nonconformist Conscience") raising an outcry. The days of the Gordon Riots were then but as yesterday. Moreover, Prince Charles Edward was still alive in exile, and excluded from inheriting the throne of his ancestors by the very Act which the Prince of Wales had apparently violated by going through the form of marriage with a Roman Catholic.

So much for the legal point of view. If we consider the matter from the civil aspect alone, it is evident that the marriage was null and void in law, and not only the contracting parties, but the clergyman who performed the ceremony, and the witnesses who were privy to it, committed an illegal act in direct disobedience of the Royal Marriage Act. The

Prince of Wales, moreover, in the spirit if not in the letter, violated the Act of Settlement.

But the marriage of any man and woman, however highly placed, or however humble, is not in the eyes of professing Christians a matter of civil contract alone. Both the Prince of Wales and Mrs. Fitzherbert were professing Christians beyond all doubt, the one a member of the Church of England, the other a member of the Church of Rome. The religious aspect of the case therefore forces itself into the controversy, whether we will or no, and the question arises: How far were these two bound by the solemn vows which they made before God?

With Mrs. Fitzherbert the answer admits of no doubt; with her marriage was a sacrament, and the vows which she took were binding on her so long as she lived. The illegality of the ceremony did not affect its validity with her. The legal point was not one on which she could be expected to feel strongly, for the whole practice of her religion was illegal at that period; the celebration of the Mass was illegal, but the Sacrament was not therefore invalid. But it may be objected that the ceremony was performed by a clergyman of the Church of England, according to the rites of that Church, and the Church of Rome does not recognise the validity of Anglican orders, though she had not at that time condemned them. The answer is that it makes no difference.

To quote Mr. Langdale, a leading Roman Catholic layman, and a cousin of Mrs. Fitzherbert, "The presence of a Catholic priest would not, in any way, have added to the [illegible]

marriage in the eyes of the Catholic Church; and, therefore, it is fair to conclude, would not have been added to them (the Anglican forms) in those (*i.e.* the case) of Mrs. Fitzherbert, a well-educated Catholic, especially likely to be well informed on the way of conducting the marriage ceremony, so as to fulfil the forms and conditions required by her own Church."[1]

What these conditions are is clearly stated in an article in the *Dublin Review* on the subject of this marriage.[2] The *Dublin Review* has always been regarded as a leading organ of educated Roman Catholics.

"The doctrine of the Catholic Church regarding marriage is plain and simple. She teaches that the marriage contract itself, which is perfected by the words, 'I take thee for my wife' on the part of the man, and 'I take thee for my husband' on the part of the woman, or by any other words, or signs, by which the contracting parties manifest their intention of taking each other for man and wife, is a sacrament.

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"Protestants are apt to fall into a mistake, that it is the priest who administers the sacrament to the wedded pair. He does no such thing. As far as the validity of the contract and of the sacrament is concerned, even when the contracting parties are both Catholics, the priest need not utter a word. His presence is only necessary as a *witness* to the contract between the parties[1]

"Up to the time of the Council of Trent the presence of a priest was not necessary for the validity of either the contract or the sacrament,[2] nor was it by any means to confer the sacrament that the Council enacted a law requiring his presence The law was made in consequence of the abuses which arose from clandestine marriages; because an immoral person who had married without witnesses, could afterwards deny the existence of the contract, and wed another publicly, and in the face of the Church. To prevent these abuses the Council of Trent enacted that the parish priest of one of the contracting parties, or some other priest deputed by him, and two other witnesses, should for the future (*in posterum*) be present (*praesento parocho*) at the marriage contract. The presence of the two other witnesses is required exactly in the same way as that of the parish priest. The law is simply that

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the marriage should be contracted in the presence of three witnesses, one of whom should necessarily be the parish priest. Nor was this law made at once obligatory even on Catholics. By the ordinance of the Council it is not to have effect in *any parish* until thirty days after it had been published there. This allowed a large discretion to each Bishop with regard to the time of its publication in his diocese, and in fact, it is not long since it has been introduced into England.[1] But it does not and never did apply to any marriage in those countries where one of the parties is not a Catholic. Neither in such marriages which are called mixed, nor in those contracted between parties neither of which belong to the Catholic Church, is the presence of any priest required for the validity of either the contract or the sacrament. It is not even necessary that the contracting parties should *know* that marriage is a sacrament. The sacrament exists wherever Christians marry as Christ intended. If they be properly disposed they will receive grace to live happily together, and to bring up their children in the fear and love of God.

"Mrs. Fitzherbert's marriage was therefore perfectly valid both as a contract and as a sacrament in the eyes of the whole Catholic

1 "The writer is incorrect in saying the Decree of the Council has been introduced into England. At this moment two Catholics may contract a valid marriage before the registrar without the presence of a priest, but such Catholics sin grievously by so doing.

"In Ireland or France two Catholics cannot contract marriage validly except in the presence of the parish priest or his deputy. A Catholic and a Protestant with a domicile in Ireland may contract marriage validly without the presence of a priest. Could they in France? The answer is disputed." (Note by Father Gavin.)

Church,[1] and to imagine that she alone of all those who professed the same faith should look upon it as invalid is monstrously absurd. Neither the Pope nor the whole Church could have annulled it, nor allowed her to marry another."[2]

To Roman Catholics the question was lifted beyond the pale of controversy in 1800. Before that time the Prince of Wales had left Mrs. Fitzherbert and married the Princess Caroline of Brunswick. In turn he had separated from her, and desired to return to Mrs. Fitzherbert; but before she would receive him again she appealed to Rome. The case was laid before the highest authorities of her Church by her director, the Rev. William Nassau, one of the priests of the church in Warwick Street, who made a journey to Rome for that purpose. After exhaustive inquiry into the whole circumstances of the marriage, the decision was given in Mrs. Fitzherbert's favour. According to the law of the Roman Catholic Church, though not according to the law of England, she was declared to be the wife of the Prince of Wales. In the judgment of the Court of Rome she occupied much the same position towards the Prince of Wales as Catherine of Arragon occupied towards Henry VIII., after he had put her away and married Anne Boleyn—a judgment which would be repudiated by the great bulk of the English people,

[1] "This is correct. The writer's inaccuracies do not affect the main issue. Mrs. Fitzherbert's marriage to George IV., being without canonical impediment, was undoubtedly a valid marriage according to Catholic teaching." (Note by Father Gavin.)

[2] This extract from the article in the *Dublin Review* is quoted in Langdale's "Memoir of Mrs Fitzherbert."

who strongly object to "any foreign jurisdicture," and stoutly maintain that "The Bishop of Rome hath no jurisdiction in this realm of England."[1] This decision was obtained for the personal satisfaction of Mrs. Fitzherbert, and was kept private. But to Roman Catholics it was all sufficient. "*Roma locuta est, causa finita est.*"

There remains the Anglican view of the validity of the marriage, *i.e.*, of the ecclesiastical law of England as against the civil. This is more conflicting; but since the Prince of Wales was a member of the Church of England, it has to be considered. According to the Erastian view, the Church of England is subject to the State, and not only as regards her temporalities, but in questions of doctrine and discipline, faith and morals, she is dominated by the civil power. Parliament therefore has the right not only to arrange the marriage laws (a power, be it noted, which is claimed by the legislative bodies in other civilised states), but to force its decision upon the Church, which is bound to accept whatever regulation of the marriage law Parliament may enact. In the case of the Royal Marriage Act, it was an Act brought forward at the instance of the Sovereign, who is the temporal head of the Church, and it passed through Parliament with the consent of the Lords Spiritual, none of whom

[1] The Book of Common Prayer, Article XXXVII.: *Of the Civil Magistrates.* Even more strongly was this expressed in the oath of allegiance in the "Bill of Rights." "And I do declare that no foreign prince, person, prelate, state or potentate hath, or ought to have, any jurisdiction, power, superiority, pre-eminence, or authority, ecclesiastical or civil, within this realm. So help me God!"

England. This argument in any case does not affect the legality or illegality of the marriage, but it serves to add to the difficulty of a question already sufficiently complicated.

The conclusion of the whole matter seems to be this. According to the civil law of England the ceremony was illegal and the marriage was null and void. According to the canon law of the Roman Catholic Church, and also of the Church of England, it was valid.

vocation was prorogued by the Government *sine die*, for protesting against the appointment of a free-thinking Bishop.[1] The clergy had no longer any means of making their voices heard, except through the Bishops in the House of Lords, who were appointed by the State. When the Royal Marriage Act was passed in 1772 Convocation was not consulted, for the simple reason that it did not exist. Therefore, argued certain canonists, the Act was a breach of the Reformation settlement between Church and State, and an unwarrantable intrusion of the temporal power into the sphere of the spiritual. Parliament was of course able to make any laws it pleased, but it could not force those laws upon the Church of England without her consent, and in this instance no opportunity was given to the clergy either to approve or disapprove of this tampering with the marriage laws. The Royal Marriage Act was therefore not binding on the conscience of the clergy.[2] The canon law remained unaltered, and there was no canonical impediment, therefore the clergyman who performed the marriage between the Prince of Wales and Mrs. Fitzherbert was within his right, and the marriage was valid according to the authorised doctrine of the Church of

[1] Hoadly, who had been appointed Bishop of Bangor—the celebrated Bangorian controversy. Convocation was not permitted to sit again until the middle of the reign of Queen Victoria—in 1852.

[2] Another conflict between the civil law and ecclesiastical may be found in the re-marriage of divorced persons. No clergyman can be forced to marry them, for the canon law of the Church forbids such marriages, treating them as invalid. Yet they are perfectly legal.

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CHAPTER VIII

PERILOUS HONOURS

(1785—1786)

THERE is a tradition that the Prince of Wales and Mrs. Fitzherbert passed their honeymoon at her villa at Richmond. The legend also says that immediately after the ceremony they set out from Park Street for Richmond, and the road (for it was winter) was so blocked with snow as to be almost impassable. The horses broke down, and they had to sup at an inn at Hammersmith before proceeding to their destination. The honeymoon was but a brief one, for they were back in London by Christmas.

The air was thick with rumour. "The lie of the day," writes Robert Hobart to the Duke of Rutland, on December 24, 1785 (after the marriage), "is that the Prince of Wales is to marry Mrs. Fitzherbert, but, I believe, totally without foundation."[1] Again he writes on December 27, "The town still talk of the Prince of Wales's marriage. He has taken a box for Mrs. Fitzherbert at the Opera, and constantly passes the greater part of the night with her. I do not hear of Prince Carnaby's being yet

[1] Rutland Papers, Hist. MSS. Comm. 14th Report, Appendix, Part I.

arrived in town.[1] Watt Smith[2] appears already much elated with the honour that is intended, or rather the dishonour which has already attended, his family. His Royal Highness's new establishment is not yet named, but no doubt the Marchioness of Buckingham[3] will be first lady of the bedchamber, and her aunt, Peg Nugent, necessary woman. If pride, arrogance, and self-sufficiency be qualities for a Popish Minister, the noble Marquis himself, by embracing that religion which he appeared to encourage in his wife, may be at the head of the Papistical Court."[4] Sir Gilbert Elliot writes to his wife (December 1785): "She (Lady Palmerston) says the report is that Mrs. Fitzherbert is, or is to be, at Carlton House; that she was married by a Roman Catholic priest, is to have £6000 a year, and is to be created a duchess."[5]

Of course that arch-gossip, Horace Walpole, soon made the marriage the subject of his letters. He writes to Sir Horace Mann, February 13, 1786: "I am obliged to you for your account of the House of Albany (the royal house of Stuart), but that extinguishing Family can make no sensation here, when we have other guess-work to talk of in a higher and more flourishing race; and yet were rumour—aye, and much more than rumour, every voice in England—to be credited, the matter [Mrs.

[1] Sir Carnaby Haggerston, Bart., Mrs. Fitzherbert's brother-in-law, who lived at Grantham, not far from Belvoir.

[2] Mrs. Fitzherbert's eldest brother.

[3] The Marquess of Buckingham was (1782-83) Lord Lieutenant of Ireland; the Marchioness was suspected of leanings to Popery.

[4] Rutland Papers, *op. cit.*

[5] "Life and Letters of Sir Gilbert Elliot, first Earl of Minto," 1874. Lady Palmerston was mother of the great Lord Palmerston.

brother-in-law), and visited him at Lulworth. The Queen knew her eldest son's character too well to take him seriously, and his extravagance of passion for Mrs. Fitzherbert had at first afforded her cynical amusement, while the King made it a subject for taunting the Prince. They never imagined that the folly would lead to marriage; besides, they knew such a marriage would be illegal, and therefore, from their point of view, impossible. The King deplored his son's infatuation, but the news of Mrs. Fitzherbert's return to England could not have made him very anxious. Both he and the Queen probably thought (if they thought about the matter at all) that the lady had surrendered at discretion. But presently the rumour came that the Prince of Wales had actually gone through a ceremony of marriage with this Roman Catholic lady. They knew not what to think, for the rumour was so persistent, so circumstantial, that it could not be ignored. If true, they regarded it as the crowning act of folly and filial disobedience.

The court was at Windsor for Christmas; the King had not seen his son for months, and would not see him; but Queen Charlotte is said to have sent for the Prince of Wales as soon as the news reached her ears, and demanded to know the truth. It is very unlikely that the Prince told her the truth. The interview which took place between mother and son (if it took place at all) must have been in private, and the categorical account of the conversation between them given by one writer must be dismissed as imaginary. The Prince, we are told, not only avowed

his marriage (which, of course, the Queen would not admit to be a marriage at all), but swore that no power on earth should separate him from his wife. He then addressed the Queen as follows: "I beg further that my wife be received at court, and proportionately as your Majesty receives her, and pays her attention from this time, so shall I render my attentions to your Majesty. The lady I have married is worthy of all homage, and my very confidential friends, with some of my wife's relations, only witnessed our marriage. Have you not always taught me to consider myself heir to the first sovereignty in the world? Where, then, will exist any risk of obtaining the ready concurrence from the House in my marriage?"[1] &c. &c. The Prince said a great many foolish things in his life, but it is certain that he never said to his mother anything so foolish as this He probably equivocated with her, as it was his habit with every one when asked a direct question. It is still more unlikely that the Queen was softened by such reasoning; she would have become harder than ever. The further statement of Dr. Doran (who quotes the conversation), "that it is certain that her Majesty received Mrs. Fitzherbert at a drawing-room in the following year with very marked courtesy," is incorrect. The printed lists of Queen Charlotte's drawing-rooms contain no mention of Mrs. Fitzherbert's name after she went through the ceremony of marriage with the Prince of Wales. On the contrary, the fact that she did not go to court occasioned comment, both in society

[1] Doran's "Lives of the Queens of England."

and in the press The following paragraph was given special prominence in the *Morning Post* a year or two later "A QUESTION What is the reason that Mrs Fitzherbert, who is a lady of fortune and fashion, never appears at court? She is visited by *some* ladies of high rank, has been in public with them, and yet never goes to the Drawing rooms at St James's This question is sent for publication by a Person who pays no regard to idle reports, but who wishes to have the mystery cleared up'[1]

But though this conversation may be dismissed as spurious, and the Prince s avowal of his marriage also, there is little doubt that an interview took place between the Queen and the Prince, on the subject of Mrs Fitzherbert, and enough passed to convince the Queen that this was no common amour The Queen was greatly annoyed that her son should entangle himself, and in the first flush of her displeasure she could not help regarding Mrs Fitzherbert with strong disfavour But with characteristic common-sense, the Queen, seeing that nothing could be done, resolved to make the best of the situation She knew that, whatever had passed her son was free in law, to marry, and she trusted to time to wear out his infatuation, and to his well known character to make him take advantage of his freedom when that time came.

The fact that Mrs Fitzherbert no longer went to court made little difference to her social position The Duchess of Cumberland was not received at

[1] *Morning Post*, Oct 10 1783 Needless to say, th s impert nent quest on was never answered.

court, but she was openly acknowledged everywhere as the Duchess. Neither was the Duchess of Gloucester received at court until many years after her marriage was declared. Mrs. Fitzherbert's non-attendance at court meant no reflection on her personal character, but it meant that, like the Duchess of Cumberland (and, for a time, the Duchess of Gloucester), she was under the ban of the royal displeasure. It was the necessary consequence of the equivocal position in which she had placed herself. The dubious attitude adopted towards her by Queen Charlotte was a sample of what Mrs. Fitzherbert found she had to face from the world in general. She, who had never before suffered the faintest whisper against her fair name, now found herself the subject of much scandalous gossip among her acquaintances, and the butt of the open abuse of the vulgar. It was part of the price she had to pay for following the dictates of her heart; and she paid it, if not without suffering, at least without a murmur. No reproaches escaped her lips, no hint of retaliation, nor any attempt at explanation; she shrank from the publicity which was thrust upon her, but she did not show herself afraid. So far from courting public notice, she altered her manner of life as little as possible. She still kept the name of Fitzherbert, she still used the Fitzherbert liveries, and she drove about in a very quiet equipage. She still maintained her separate establishment; she lived in her own house at Richmond, and the Prince at Carlton House. But when she came to London, residence in Park Street being no longer desirable, she rented for a time Lord Uxbridge's furnished

mansion in St. James's Square. This she did at the Prince's request, for he wished her to be nearer to him. He also took for her a box at the Opera, and in this box he was seen with her almost every night.

To do the Prince justice, short of openly acknowledging the marriage, he did everything in his power to secure for Mrs. Fitzherbert respect and consideration. He caused it to be announced among all his friends and intimates that honour paid to Mrs Fitzherbert was honour paid to him. He made it a condition that at all private parties and entertainments which he honoured with his presence she was to be invited also. If she were not asked he would not go. He further insisted that in her case the ordinary rules of precedence were to be waived, and at all entertainments she was always to be seated at the same table as himself; and in public, when the eyes of all were fixed upon him, he always paid her the most courtly deference, which the "first gentleman in Europe" knew well how to assume. His manner towards her was exactly that with which a husband would treat an honoured wife, and manners at that period were much more formal than they are now. "The Prince," said one who knew him in those early days, "never forgot to go through the form of saying to Mrs. Fitzherbert, with the most respectful bow, 'Madam, may I be allowed the honour of seeing you home in my carriage?'" The same writer bears testimony to the "extreme fascination of his manners."[1]

[1] Lady C. Bury's "Diary illustrative of the Times of George IV."

But if the Prince had great influence in the world of fashion, he was not all powerful. Among his friends he reigned supreme, and they included many of the great Whig families. But the Tory houses were by no means prepared to follow his lead blindly in social matters. He could not force people to receive Mrs. Fitzherbert, since he would not acknowledge her to be his wife. Her position at first was one of considerable difficulty and embarrassment. Even her relatives were for a time divided against her. Her brothers, it is true, championed her cause, but their indiscreet advocacy did more harm than good. The Erringtons stood by her, and so did the Haggerstons, but the Welds and Fitzherberts regarded her with doubtful approval, and the Seftons avoided her. Lady Sefton's defection was, perhaps, the most serious blow Mrs. Fitzherbert had to endure from the social point of view, for she had made her *debût* in fashionable London under her wing; but in time Lady Sefton came round. At first the great majority of her friends knew not what to think. It seemed a thing impossible that a woman of Mrs. Fitzherbert's character and position should dishonour herself and disgrace her family by becoming the mistress of the Prince of Wales. To those who knew her well the thing was unthinkable, and yet, how could she become his wife in the face of recent legislation? If some form, or ceremony, of marriage had taken place, why was it not definitely stated? The Prince could not be questioned directly on such a matter, and his friends met all questions on his behalf with evasions or denials. Mrs. Fitzherbert had no

answer but silence. She had done nothing against her conscience, she maintained, and the rest must take its chance. But it was noticed that she still openly practised her religion. She was visited by her spiritual director, and continued to attend Mass at the Warwick Street Chapel. This, her Roman Catholic friends argued, would have been impossible unless her confessor were satisfied that she was not living in sin; and though many of them could not approve of the step she had taken, which they regarded as dangerous and unwise, they were satisfied that she was really married to the Prince according to the requirements of their Church. Having satisfied themselves on this point, they silently supported her by their social influence, which in many cases was considerable. The view generally taken of Mrs. Fitzherbert's conduct by those of her religion is well put by Lady Jerningham, who, writing to her daughter, Lady Bedingfield, March 6, 1786, says: "Mrs. Fitzherbert is generally believed to have been married to the Prince, but it is a very hazardous proceeding, as there are two Acts of Parliament against the validity of such an alliance, concerning her being a subject and her being a Catholick. God knows how it will turn out—it may be to the glory of our Belief, or it may be to the great dismay and destruction of it."[1]

The support given to Mrs. Fitzherbert at this juncture did not come only from the old Roman Catholic families. The Duchess of Devonshire frequently appeared in public with her, and she was

[1] "The Jerningham Letters," *op. cit.*

a constant and honoured guest at Devonshire House. The Duchess of Devonshire's example was followed by nearly all the great Whig ladies, though here and there one, like the Duchess of Portland, at first held aloof. They called upon her, invited her to their parties, and treated her with every courtesy.

Another good friend of Mrs. Fitzherbert's was Lady Clermont, who held a great position in the society of that day. Lady Clermont was a woman of advanced age, who had maintained a stainless reputation throughout her long life. She was a great friend of Marie Antoinette, as well as of Queen Charlotte, and was a welcome guest both at Versailles and St. James's. Lord and Lady Clermont were aristocrats of the old school, courtly and dignified in their manners, and with a high sense of *noblesse oblige*. At their house in Berkeley Square they entertained with stately hospitality. They had the best *chef* and wines in London, and invitations to the Clermonts' dinners and assemblies were eagerly sought. The Prince of Wales often dined with them, and so did Mrs. Fitzherbert. Lady Clermont held her in high esteem, and always supported her. Mrs. Fitzherbert's goodness, her dignity, and her reserve all appealed to this *grande dame* of a generation fast passing away. She was entirely on her side, and bold were they who presumed to question where Lady Clermont approved.

On the Tory side was the Marchioness of Salisbury, who prided herself on taking a line of her own. Lady Salisbury was a great lady of a very different type to the Duchess of Devonshire. It was well



MRS. FITZHERBERT

(*From the Painting by* JOHN RUSSELL, R.A., *at Swynnerton, by permission of* BASIL FITZHERBERT, Esq.)

said "that while the Duchess of Devonshire never seemed to be conscious of her rank, Lady Salisbury ceased not for an instant to remember hers, or to compel others to remember it also." She was a woman of great ability, a clever conversationalist, but dictatorial and obstinate. She had known Mrs. Fitzherbert before her connection with the Prince of Wales, and as she was convinced that she would do nothing wrong, she continued to welcome her to her house. Lady Salisbury had parties on Sunday evening, and she would not give them up, though appealed to by the Bishop of London. All her habits were conservative, and she retained her sedan chair, and running footmen with blue-and-silver liveries, long after these things had been generally given up.[1]

Mrs. Fitzherbert was tacitly accorded a position *sui generis*, and supported by her friends she soon succeeded in living down the greater part of the opposition against her. That she did so was also due to her tact, her amiability, her unassuming manners, her kindness of heart, and the straightforwardness of her character. The young Prince at this time loved her with a love that was almost adoration. His "white rose" he called her, partly because of her Jacobite ancestry, partly because of her pale fair loveliness, but chiefly because of her innate purity; and white roses were always her favourite flower. In the world it was noted in Mrs. Fitzherbert's favour that the Prince had greatly improved. The change for the better in his habits and conver-

[1] Lady Salisbury was the daughter of the first Marquis of Downshire, and married in 1773 James, first Marquis of Salisbury.

sation was marked, and could only be ascribed to the influence of a good woman. The young Prince, in spite of his wildness and folly, had ingrained in him a strong love of domesticity, which he had inherited perhaps from his German ancestors. In his youth his home had been unhappy, and his parents unsympathetic; then he was thrown upon the town without any home-life at all. But this beautiful and gracious woman, with her purity of purpose and unobtrusive goodness, made a home for him such as he had never known before. Though the Prince of Wales's public life belonged to the nation, his home life was his own. He had the right to ask that it should be kept sacred, and none should grudge him the quiet hours he spent under the roof of the woman he loved, and who believed herself bound to him by the holiest ties. Here, at least, they might have found sanctuary. Mrs. Fitzherbert usurped no one's place, interfered with no one, and put forward no pretensions. The Prince made no claim on her behalf, either from Parliament or from the nation. All that they asked at this time was to be left alone, to enjoy their happiness in their own way. But the fierce curiosity of the world, which is always meddling in the private affairs of other people, refused to leave them in peace. Were they married or were they not? remained the absorbing question. The denials of the Prince's friends counted for little, for people remembered how emphatically the rumour of the marriage between the Duke of Gloucester and Lady Waldegrave had been denied, and yet it proved to be true after all. The accounts of Mrs. Fitzherbert's

marriage were categorical, and the fact that she was supported and visited by many ladies of the first fashion lent the weight of corroborative evidence With the public the opinion gained ground that a marriage had taken place The Marquis of Lothian wrote to the Duke of Rutland, March 4 1786, "You ask me my opinion respecting the Prince's marriage I think it has all the appearance of being true I believe, when he has been spoken to about it, he has been violent, but I cannot find out that he has denied it peremptorily He has said to one of the most intimate in his family [household] when asked on the subject, that he *might* answer, if asked the question in the negative But surely a report of this sort, were it not true, should be publicly con tradicted, and I am amazed that some member of Parliament has not mentioned it in the House Most people believe it, and I confess I am one of the number Though I dined alone with him, and you know the general topic of his conversation about women, he never mentioned *her* to me amongst others I am very sorry for it, for it does him infinite mischief, particularly amongst the trading and lower sort of people, and if true must ruin him in every light'

This was the view taken by many of the Prince's friends, especially by the leaders of the Whig party, such as the Duke of Portland and Fox, and their supporters in Parliament The Prince had identified himself with the Whigs, a party which derived the greater part of its support from the middle and

[1] Rutland Papers, *op cit*

mercantile classes, most of whom were staunch Protestants and Nonconformists. It needed only the breath of such a rumour to fan the smouldering embers of Protestant prejudice into a No-Popery blaze. It was impossible that the Whig leaders should seem to connive at the secret marriage of the heir-apparent with a Roman Catholic, and yet the Prince was so intimate with them, both in private and public life, that it was difficult for them to dissociate themselves altogether from his follies. Their political adversaries were not slow to see this, and began to make capital out of it.

To add to the difficulty of the situation, the Prince had been so inconsiderate as to contract his alliance with Mrs. Fitzherbert just at a time when he was engaged in an acrimonious correspondence with the King on the subject of his money difficulties. The King had hitherto refused to pay a penny of the Prince's debts, and this fresh act of filial disobedience was not likely to loosen his purse-strings. The Prince wanted money badly. In addition to the debts arising from his habits of personal extravagance, his building operations at Carlton House, which he had now resumed, were costing him a great deal of money, and his secret and imprudent marriage of necessity increased his embarrassments. Mrs. Fitzherbert, it is true, was free from the reproach of avarice. She gave herself to the Prince without any settlements or money stipulations whatever, and she trusted wholly to his honour. She still enjoyed her jointure from Mr. Fitzherbert, which had hitherto proved sufficient for her needs; and she would have been quite content to make

that enough, and not to take a penny from the Prince. But the Prince insisted on her living in a style more commensurate with his dignity. She had to set up an establishment in London, and to entertain him when he wished. Entertaining the Prince was a very expensive matter indeed. Mrs. Fitzherbert lived as quietly and unostentatiously as she could, but these things necessarily increased her expenditure. The Prince was nothing if not generous, and he would have given her half his income at this time if it had been in his power. He had no idea of the value of money, but Mrs. Fitzherbert knew too well his embarrassments, and would not accept from him a penny more than the sum necessary to meet the extra expenses now entailed upon her, which she estimated at £3000 a year. That sum was accordingly given to her by the Prince. This, with her jointure of £2000 a year, she considered to be sufficient. True, the Prince made her valuable presents of jewellery and plate and furniture towards her new establishment. She tried in vain to check his liberality, though the money he spent on her was but a drop in the ocean of his debts.

As the King would do nothing to help, the Prince at last prevailed upon Fox and Sheridan to bring the matter before the notice of Parliament. The time was singularly inopportune, for the report of his marriage to a Roman Catholic had made the Prince very unpopular. Fox was one of those who did not believe that a ceremony had taken place. Had he not the Prince's letter, of December 11, 1785, in which he declared that "there never was any

ground for these reports which have of late been so malevolently circulated." Sheridan, on the other hand, was probably one of the few who knew the truth. But he was devoted to the Prince and also to Mrs. Fitzherbert, and was quite free from any excess of scruple. Fox and Sheridan raised the question of the Prince of Wales's income early in April 1786, during a debate in the House of Commons on the Civil List. The facts and arguments that Fox brought forward seem unanswerable. "It is my conviction," he said, "that the dignity of the Crown, and even the national advantage, require that the Heir-Apparent should be enabled to live, not merely in ease, but in splendour. Under George I., when the Civil List amounted only to £700,000 a year, the Prince of Wales (afterwards George II.) had an allowance of £100,000 a year. Yet now, when in consequence of the suppressions made in the King's household the Civil List may be fairly estimated at £950,000 a year, only £50,000 are given to the Prince of Wales. If His Majesty, as is evident by the demands of this evening (the Civil List showed a deficit of over £200,000, and the King asked Parliament to make this good), cannot make the former sum cover his expenses, how can it be expected that His Royal Highness is to live upon the last-mentioned income?"

Fox's arguments produced no effect. Members, even on the Whig benches, listened in silence. Only Alderman Newnham, member of Parliament for the City of London, supported Fox. Pitt, speaking in the name of the Government, in his most frigid and contemptuous tones, merely said,

"he was not instructed to make any communication to the House respecting the branches of the Royal Family that he should avoid the presumption of expressing any private opinion on the subject"

Pitt's answer was only to be expected, but the chilling silence with which Fox's words were greeted by his supporters in the House brought home to the Whig leaders and also to the popularity-loving Prince, more forcibly than anything else had done, the damage which the rumour of his secret marriage was doing him with the nation The Prince, therefore, without doors, became more definite in his denials

Thomas Orde writes to the Duke of Rutland, May 16, 1786 "The reports about the Prince of Wales are full of contradictions It is certain that many of the persons said to be present were not there, and the clergyman who is supposed to have performed the marriage ceremony (Parson Johnes) had, as Lord S[outhampton] assures me, no share in it The Prince denies the thing, but has at the same time dropped hints of *her* belief in the connection, and has wished, therefore, that their happiness may not be interrupted by conjectures and rumours This, however, gives reason to imagine that some ceremony has passed

"His Royal Highness was present at the marriage of Lady H— W— with Mr C—, and after the ceremony the Duchess of B unthinkingly turned to his Royal Highness and said, 'She supposed this to be the first marriage at which he had been present' The Prince assured her Grace with great energy that it *really* was the *first* The Duchess

hereupon recollected her *faux pas*, and was confounded.[1] The conduct of her (Mrs. Fitzherbert's) friends is very different. Some of them see her and countenance her, others totally avoid her."[2]

It may be supposed that the topic was not confined to private letters. The press, then far less restrained than now, continued to teem with scarcely veiled innuendoes and scandalous rumours. Some journals maintained that "some sort of marriage" had taken place, others stoutly denied it. Nor did the caricaturists, those inevitable satirists on the follies of the day, linger behind. Prints and cartoons on the subject of the marriage were published in great number and variety; they were exposed in the shop windows, and even sold in the streets, to the great delight of the vulgar. All, or nearly all, of them were wide of the facts, and many were exceedingly scurrilous. It was an age of coarseness, and the license permitted to the caricaturists was great.

We may dismiss most of these prints to the limbo of their deserved obscurity, but the cartoons of the celebrated caricaturist, Gillray,[3] on the Fitzherbert

[1] Wilkes relates this anecdote in a different manner. "The Bishop of B. told me that a most respectable lady of his particular friendship said to him, 'The Prince came in here yesterday, overjoyed, saying, "I never did better in anything. I behaved incomparably well. I could not have thought it, as the case was quite new to me." The lady answered, "Your Royal Highness always behaves well. What was the case that was quite new to you?" The Prince replied, "I was at a marriage, and gave the bride away." The lady said, "Was Your Royal Highness never at a marriage before?" The Prince answered, laying his right hand with eagerness upon his breast, "Never, upon my honour!"'"—Wilkes' "Letters to His Daughter," vol. iii. p. 299.

[2] Rutland Papers, *op. cit.*

[3] James Gillray (1757–1815). Gillray was then at the zenith of his fame, and his caricatures on Mrs. Fitzherbert's marriage, &c.,

marriage call for notice, if only because of their influence on contemporary thought They were printed and sold by thousands, and found their way (one or another) into nearly every important house in the kingdom, they formed a never ending source of conversation and amusement It is not too much to say that Gillray's caricatures did more than anything else to drag Mrs Fitzherbert into unwilling publicity They also gave credence to the persistent rumour that a secret marriage had taken place between her and the Prince of Wales Notwithstanding the denials, authorised and un authorised, and despite all appearances to the contrary, this remained a fixed belief in the popular mind so long as they both lived There is no need to describe these cartoons in detail One will serve as a specimen of the rest It is entitled, "*Wife or no Wife, or a Trip to the Continent,' designed by Carlo Khan* (Charles Fox) Burke, in cassock and biretta as a Jesuit priest, is conducting the marriage ceremony at the altar The Prince of Wales is placing a wedding ring on Mrs Fitzherbert's finger Her headdress is composed of three ostrich feathers and the ring is of unusual size (a reference to the popular rumour that the ring used at the Park Street ceremony was borrowed for the emergency) Fox is giving away the bride, an allusion to the Tory fiction that the Whig leader had planned the marriage in order to secure a greater influence over the Prince Sheri-

were mostly issued by Miss Humphrey, 29 St. James s Street where he lived As each new cartoon appeared her shop window was surrounded by a curious crowd.

dan and George Hanger (a boon companion of the Prince) are witnesses, and Lord North, dressed as a stage coachman who has acted as driver to the runaway couple (or as John Bull), is fast asleep in a corner.

The political animus of this print was obvious. It was designed to throw the onus of this unpopular marriage on the shoulders of the Whig leaders, who, knowing the accusation to be void of truth, resented it even more strongly than the personages most concerned. The Prince, when he noticed these attacks at all, only referred to them in terms of jocularity, and this also applied to any reference to the connection between himself and Mrs. Fitzherbert in the public press. In this policy of *laissez faire* he was advised by Mrs. Fitzherbert, for she always (except in one absolutely necessary instance) made it a rule to ignore the attacks upon her, either public or private, thus exercising a self-control as wise as it was rare.

CHAPTER IX

CARLTON HOUSE AND BRIGHTON

(1786)

Mrs. Fitzherbert found the brilliant society of the Prince's circle very different from the quiet Catholic atmosphere in which she had lived the greater part of her life. The staid Roman Catholic families, with their narrow outlook and stately old-world manners, bore no more resemblance to the merry, reckless throng at Carlton House than a nun bears to a woman of pleasure. The creed of the Prince of Wales and his friends was one of pure hedonism—"*Carpe diem, Juan, carpe, carpe*" was their motto. Carlton House was a court of pleasure pure and simple.

The London season of 1786 was one of unusual gaiety. The depression which had followed on the American War had vanished like a mist, except at St. James's, where the King still unavailingly lamented the loss of "my American colonies," and curtailed in consequence his few and dull entertainments. The court having practically abdicated its functions, society in London looked to the Prince of Wales to give it a lead, and he responded with a will, for pleasure was to him the breath of his nostrils. Always associated with him now was "the lovely Fitzherbert." Her house in St. James's

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Elizabeth Luttrell, aided her on these occasions, but she had not her sister's dignity—her manners were unpolished, and her conversation broad. The Prince of Wales and Mrs. Fitzherbert invariably attended the weekly assemblies at Cumberland House, and the Duchess treated Mrs. Fitzherbert exactly as though she were the Prince's acknowledged wife, and showed her marked friendship. There may have been a spice of malice in this, for the Duchess knew how her recognition of Mrs. Fitzherbert would annoy the King and Queen.

Queen Charlotte detested the Duchess, and declared that she and the Duke pandered to the Prince of Wales's follies in order to keep their hold on him. She spoke of Cumberland House as though it were a hotbed of iniquity. Certainly the play there was high, but everything was conducted with propriety.[1]

At Carlton House Mrs. Fitzherbert was now the presiding divinity, and at all parties to which ladies were invited Mrs. Fitzherbert, by the Prince's wish and desire, played the part of hostess. She was the central star of a brilliant constellation. The Prince's court was far from being the stye of Epicurus, which some have depicted it. To quote a contemporary writer: "Carlton House was the centre in which genius, taste, and wit were to be found, and to which elegance, beauty, and refinement in the fair sex most amply resorted. Never, perhaps,

[1] The French Embassy, then at Hyde Park Corner, was another centre of pleasure. The French Ambassador, Comte d'Adhemar, gave Sunday evening parties, which Mrs. Fitzherbert and the Prince of Wales frequently attended. The Duke of Orleans was much in England at this time.

had society in England boasted such an union of the most brilliant qualities of the human mind as was assembled at the table of His Royal Highness; never had female charm shown with more dazzling lustre than at the parties where ladies were admitted."[1]

The names of such beautiful and brilliant women as the Duchess of Cumberland, the Duchess of Devonshire, the Duchess of Rutland, Lady Melbourne, Lady Clare, Lady Clermont, Mrs. Crewe, Mrs Sheridan, and others too numerous to be mentioned here, form a guarantee of the truth of this statement. Nor were the male *habitués* of Carlton House one whit inferior to the women. The Prince had his wild companions doubtless, but among his chosen intimates were many men whose reputation stood high in the State by virtue of their character and commanding abilities. When we remember that the Prince was only twenty-four years of age, it is remarkable that he should have been able to attract to his side, and to hold his own with, men so distinguished in their several ways as Fox, Sheridan, Burke, Grey, Francis, Windham, Erskine, and many more, each of whom by virtue of his talents was deemed an ornament to any society. It is a proof of his abilities which cannot be explained away, even by his most determined detractors[2] Of Fox we have already spoken, of the

[1] Adolphus's "History of George III" London, 1841, vol. iii

[2] Thackeray, who could see no good in George IV, writes "At first he made a pretence of having Burke, and Fox, and Sheridan for his friends But how could such men be serious before such an empty scapegrace as this lad? Fox might talk dice with him, and Sheridan wine, but what else had these men of genius in common with their tawdry young host of Carlton House?"

Again he pours contempt in the well known passage "But this

others, Sheridan[1] formed an admirable type. He had not been many years in Parliament, and had already attained the height of celebrity as a man of letters and as a politician. His social qualities, his brilliant and ready wit, and his serenity of temper, which nothing ruffled, made him a great favourite with the Prince, to whom he filled the post of confidential adviser. He was a young man, still in the thirties, and his handsome features had not yet been marred by his excesses in wine. Very different was the eloquent Burke,[2] who had a special link with Mrs. Fitzherbert from the fact that he was half a Roman Catholic. Tall, with dignified deportment and air of command which impressed the House of Commons, he too could unbend at Carlton House, and pour forth words in his melodious voice that ranged from lofty flights of eloquence to polished sarcasm. He was to the Prince a valuable ally. So in another way was

George, what was he? I look through all his life and recognise but a bow and a grin. I try and take him to pieces, and find silk stockings, padding, stays, a coat with frogs and a fur collar, a star and a blue ribbon, a pocket-handkerchief prodigiously scented, one of Truefitt's best nutty brown wigs reeking with oil, a set of teeth and a huge black stock, under-waistcoats, more under-waistcoats, and then nothi- ("*The Four Georges.*")

Against Thackeray's rhodomontade may fairly be set the opini Sir Walter Scott. "He (Sir Walter Scott) talked to me of Geo of whom he was very fond. He spoke of his intellectual faculty he considered of a very high order. He said his exalted breeding bespoke nothing but kindness and benevolence; observed that when he was roused every inch of him was William Knighton's "Memoirs," October 3, 1831). remembered that Sir Walter Scott knew George IV. did not.

[1] Richard Brinsley Sheridan (1751–1816), dramati *mentary orator.*

[2] Edmund Burke (1729–1797), orator and politician.

Sir Philip Francis, the reputed author of the "Letters of Junius" whose biting bitterness sometimes fell in with the Prince's mood, and whose pen, dipped in gall, was then devoted to the service of the Prince's political friends[1] Another of this brilliant group was Charles Grey,[2] who had not long left Cambridge, and had only this year (1786) entered Parliament, where he had lately made a speech which placed him in the first rank of debaters He was an ardent follower of Fox yet no two men could be more unlike in disposition Grey was cold, punctilious and priggish but he was high minded and honourable with a strong sense of his duty to the nation Just now, like all the young hope of the Whig Party, he was in high favour at Carlton House, but he and the Prince were too dissimilar in character and temperament to long remain friends More to the Prince's liking was the polished and wealthy Windham ("Weathercock Windham'), who, like so many of the Prince's friends, dabbled in letters as well as politics, and the clever and crafty Erskine Lord North was also a visitor to Carlton House, sometime the King's trusted Prime Minister, but now in opposition to Pitt, and hobnobbing with those whom the King called his "enemies' He was a welcome guest at the Prince's convivial parties, where he was a great favourite with the younger men by reason of his quick wit and easy going temper He bore a striking likeness to George III, which caused the

[1] Sir Philip Francis (1708 1773), miscellaneous writer and journalist.

[2] Charles Grey, second Earl Grey (1764-1845) afterwards the Prime Minister who carried the Reform Bill of 1832

Prince of Wales to suggest that "either his royal grandmother or North's mother must have played her husband false."

It must be admitted the Prince's friends were not all as these, and even among them, with "Youth on the prow and Pleasure at the helm," too free indulgence in the wine-cup often led to revels which, though perhaps excusable in youth, sadly compromised the dignity of the men (not all of them young) who took part in them. But it must be remembered that drinking was deep and play was high in those days, not at Carlton House only, but in many of the mansions of the great. It must be added in the Prince's favour that, in an age when hard-swearing was general, the language at the Prince's assemblies, though free, was never coarse, and harshly though the King and Queen treated him, he never sanctioned a word in public which would seem to show a want of respect to his parents.

Behind all the brilliancy and extravagance of Carlton House stalked the ever-growing spectre of the Prince's debts. The crisis came, perhaps the Prince had timed it so to come, with the close of the London season of this year (1786). Shortly after the half-year the bills came pouring in, and other claims fell due. The Jews would advance no more. The moneylenders and tradesmen waxed so importunate that it became obvious, even to the Prince, that something must be done, unless bailiffs were actually to enter his house. The subject was one of long and anxious discussion between the Prince and his friends. Mrs. Fitzherbert, Sheridan, and Fox were called into council. Mrs. Fitzherbert

urged immediate and drastic retrenchment, and Fox agreed with her view But Sheridan advised that one more appeal should first be made to the Government Pitt was approached with a demand for £250 000, that sum representing roughly the Prince's debts The Prime Minister, not wishing to take upon himself the onus of an absolute refusal, temporised and equivocated and generally behaved in so unsatisfactory a manner that, as Pitt wished, the Prince lost patience, and made a direct appeal to his father The King affected to consider the matter and with the knowledge and confidence of Pitt asked as before, for another detailed statement of liabilities—not, as the event proved, because he had any intention of paying the Prince s debts, but because he wanted to know on whom and how his son spent his money Again the Prince fell into the trap A schedule was duly furnished, and on it was found an item amounting to £54,000, for jewellery, plate, furniture, &c which, it was said the Prince had ordered for Mrs Fitzherbert, to set her up in her new establishment in London It was not an unreasonable amount, all things considered, but it served to anger the King, and furnished a pretext for him to refuse to help his son The King wrote the Prince a short letter, in terms "not very civil declaring that neither now, nor at any future time, would he sanction an increase in his son's allowance

The King s refusal was not altogether unexpected but the curt, harsh terms in which his letter was written enraged the Prince He showed the letter to his friends as a fresh proof that his

father "hated" him, and that it was useless for him to humiliate himself before the King. Always in extremes, the Prince now resolved upon a decided step. He claimed to take it on his own initiative, and certainly he did not consult either Fox or Sheridan in the six hours which passed between his receiving the King's letter and his replying to it. This reply took the form of an ultimatum, in which he informed the King, that since he would not help him, he would immediately shut up Carlton House, live as a private gentleman, and set aside £40,000 a year for the payment of his debts, so that all the world might know the issue between them. This threat made the King uncomfortable, for he had sent frequent requests to Parliament to pay his own debts, despite the enormous Civil List which he enjoyed, and he had no wish to be represented in an unpopular light. He temporised, and sent the Prince a message through Lord Southampton, saying that he had not *absolutely* refused, and if his son took so rash a step he must abide by the consequences. But the Prince's blood was up; he refused to be played with any longer, and he replied in a letter intended for publication, wherein, after recapitulating his view of the King's refusal, he said that he could not delay longer, not only because of "the pressing importunities of many indigent and deserving creditors," but because "further procrastination might have exposed me to legal insults." He would therefore reduce every expense in his household, even those necessary to his birth and rank, "till I have totally liberated myself from the present embarrassments that

oppress me."[1] Brave words these, and well worthy of a high-spirited young prince.

To this letter the King vouchsafed no answer. Perhaps he did not believe that his pleasure-loving and self-indulgent son would act upon his words. If so, he was mistaken. Mrs. Fitzherbert's influence strengthened the Prince in his high resolve. He lost not a day in carrying his words into effect. The half-finished work at Carlton House was stopped, and the workmen discharged on the moment; the scaffolding remained a witness to all London of the straits to which the heir-apparent was reduced. The state apartments at Carlton House were closed, the Prince retaining only a few private rooms for his own use. Half the servants were discharged, and those who were retained suffered a reduction in their wages, which it is only fair to say they suffered cheerfully—perhaps they thought that the evil day would not last long. The Prince also shut up his stables, and sold his horses and carriages, liveries and harness, by public auction. The Prince gained little by the sale, a poor £7000; and the proceeding intensely annoyed the King and Queen. But the epithets, "undignified," "revengeful," "theatrical," and so forth, which the court party freely applied to the Prince's retrenchments, were hardly justified. Pique had, no doubt, something to do with this sudden passion for economy, but there was also a real and honourable desire on the part of the Prince to pay his just debts, and free himself from galling embarrassments. It was hoped by the Prince's friends

[1] Letter of the Prince of Wales to George III., July 9, 1786.

that this spectacle of a young and generous Prince, nobly striving to overcome his difficulties, would touch the heart of the nation. Fox took this view; and though the Prince in writing to the King had acted without consulting him, he thoroughly approved of the course the Prince was now following. Indeed, Fox seems to have gone further, and to have approved, if not suggested, that the Prince should retire for a time to the Continent, where it would be easier for him to carry out his plan of retrenchment.[1]

If the Prince had gone to the Continent (probably to Hanover) a practical object-lesson would have been presented to the nation of the King's impossibility to live in harmony with his sons, or to realise the advantage of having them in England. At that time three of the King's sons, unable, or unwilling, to stay under the paternal roof, had been sent out of the country. The Duke of York was in Hanover, Prince William was at sea, and Prince Edward at Geneva. Arrangements were also being made for the expatriation of the younger Princes, as soon as they were old enough, to the obscure German university of Göttingen, which was considered by the King a superior place to Oxford or Cambridge for the training of English princes. Nor were the King's relations with his brothers any more fortunate. The Duke of Gloucester and his blameless Duchess were living at Florence, under the ban of the royal autocrat's displeasure. The Duke and Duchess of Cumberland had only a few months

[1] *Vide* Letter of the Prince of Wales to Mr. Fox, July 19, 1786.—Grey's "Life."

before returned from exile, and were in public disgrace at court. Of all the King's sons "only the eldest," says Sir Nathaniel Wraxall, "remained at home in a dismantled palace, all the state apartments of which were shut up, his establishment dismissed, and himself reduced in externals to the condition of a private gentleman."[1]

The Princes could not all have been in the wrong and the King alone right. George III. was a well-meaning and conscientious man, but in his dealings with his brothers and sons he showed himself not only unwise but harsh and despotic. In the case of the Prince of Wales this harshness came perilously near to hatred. The Queen was also to blame, for she helped to stir up the family discord, and, imbued with the spirit of the little German Court whence she came, she aided and abetted the King in his petty domestic tyrannies. It is no wonder that their high-spirited sons, born and bred in England, did not submit kindly to so irksome a yoke. An instance of the King's unwisdom in dealing with his sons was shown in the open ridicule which he poured upon the Prince of Wales's plan of economy. He made merry with his courtiers over the unfinished work at Carlton House, he exhibited to them a model which the Prince had sent him of what the palace would ultimately be like, and he asked derisively when it would be finished. The jest was not very well-timed, nor in the best of taste, for whatever were the Prince's extravagances he had borne for three years the principal burden of representing royalty in the metropolis. Though the Prince in his

[1] Wraxall's "Posthumous Memoirs."

money troubles did not carry public sympathy with him, neither did the King in his refusal to help him. It was well known that in the King's court economy was practised to the verge of meanness, yet the King never had enough money, and was frequently coming to Parliament for more. The nation wondered what became of the money, and many said it went to the Queen's needy German relatives, but the truth was that the greater part of it was used by the King for the purpose of keeping his political friends in office. No King spent less on himself than George III., or led a simpler or more moral life, but public opinion was not with him on this point; it was thought that, if the Prince had to be helped, his father was the one to help him. This view found expression in a caricature of the day, which depicted the King and Queen coming out of the treasury loaded with money-bags, and the Prince following in the rags of the prodigal son.

But the cleverest of the satirical prints which refer to the breaking-up of the Prince's establishment at Carlton House parodies the well-known scene in Sheridan's *School for Scandal.* The Prince, as Charles Surface, holds a mock auction, and knocks down the family portraits. Lot 1 is the picture of "Farmer George and his Wife," which is described as going for "not more than one crown." Lot 2 is Mrs. Fitzherbert. Through the open door is seen Tattersall's and the sale of the Prince's stud. This sale lent credence to the rumour that the Prince was going to Hanover for a time.

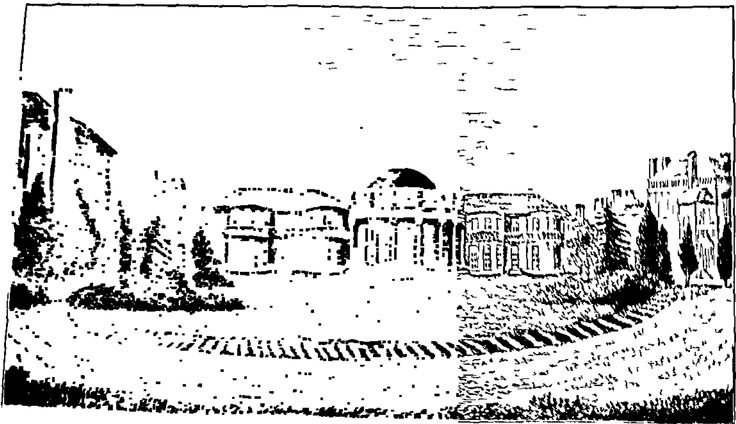
But the Prince did not go to Hanover. He went to Brighton.

Brighton, or "Brighthelmstone," as it was then called, had not long emerged from the obscurity of a fishing village, it bore little resemblance to the "London by the sea" we know to day Kemptown had not been built, Kings Road had not been planned, and Hove was nothing but a hamlet Brighton was at the beginning of its prosperous career, yet it was nearer its social zenith then than now, for the heir apparent to the throne, "the first gentleman in Europe, the incomparable arbiter of fashion, honoured it with frequent visits, and made it his favourite residence The Prince first went to Brighton in 1783, on a visit to the Duke and Duchess of Cumberland, who were residing there for the summer, and some have it (though there is no proof) that he first met Mrs Fitzherbert there He came again in 1784, having been recommended sea bathing for a malady to which he was always subject, a swelling of the glands of the throat which, by the way, led to the wearing of the preposterously high collars and stocks which he made fashionable This time he was followed by many of the great world We read of Mr Pitt and Mr Fox being there, the Duke of Chartres, and the Duke of Queensberry The Prince stayed in a house a little way back from the sea, surrounded by trees and a garden, and with a fine view It belonged to Lord Egremont's brother The Brighton air suited the Prince so well and he liked the house so much, that he bought the property He gave orders that most of the old house should be pulled down, and a new one erected The work was begun at once The Prince came down to Brighton in the summer of

1785 to superintend the operations, and it was during this visit that he was said to have gone across to the French coast to see Mrs. Fitzherbert. By the next summer (1786) the Pavilion was almost finished —that is to say, so far as any house in which the Prince lived could ever be finished, for building was with him a mania.

At this period the Marine Pavilion, as it was first called (later, the Royal Palace), had not taken on its present Chinese, pseudo-oriental aspect. The most remarkable feature of the building, as it was then altered for the Prince, consisted of a circular edifice in the centre crowned by a dome or cupola: this was connected by Ionic colonnades to the two wings. The north wing was new, but the other wing was merely adapted from the original villa. There were balconies and verandahs so as to admit air and exclude heat, and a view of the sea could be obtained from almost every window. Before the Pavilion, looking towards the sea, was a lawn, with shrubs and flowers, separated only from the public grounds by a low wall and trellis-work, for in those days the Prince of Wales had no objection to see and be seen. The Pavilion, in short, was merely a pleasant villa, not a royal residence. It was a retreat for a prince, but not for his court, planned something after the manner of the pavilion of "Sans Souci" in the gardens of Potsdam, where Frederick the Great loved to pass quiet days. It was some years later, when the Prince tried to convert this pleasant retreat into a royal palace, that it assumed the grotesque aspect it wears to-day.

The Prince left his semi-dismantled palace in Pall



THE PAVILION, BRIGHTON, IN 1778

(From an old Print)

Mall on July 11, and, true to his new plan of retrenchment, he travelled down to Brighton in a hired postchaise—a fact which was duly noticed by the newspapers and caricaturists. One cartoon represents the Prince and Mrs. Fitzherbert leaving London in a hired coach. The lady is studying "The Principles of Economy." The coach is piled high with furniture, vegetables, meat, small beer, and raisin wine. Weltje, the Prince's major-domo, is driving. The cartoon was not correct, for Mrs. Fitzherbert did not accompany the Prince to Brighton, but followed him a fortnight later. She, also on economy bent, had given up her house in St. James's Square, and the delay in her going to Brighton arose from the need of finding a house for her there, as she refused, until her marriage with the Prince was openly acknowledged, to live under the same roof with him. A pretty, modest villa was found for her close to the Pavilion, a little house with green shutters, and separated only from the mansion by a strip of garden.[1]

Mrs Fitzherbert arrived on July 24. A local authority says that she then "came to Brighton for the first time recorded."[2] But it is almost certain that she had visited Brighton before; she appears to have been well known there in 1782, in the days before she was famous, and there is a tradition that the Prince followed her to Brighton during his ardent courtship in the summer of 1784.

[1] This villa was situated quite near to what is now the North Gate It must not be confounded with the house which Mrs. Fitzherbert built to the south of the Pavilion, on the Steine.

[2] "The Brighton Pavilion and its Royal Associations." By J G. Bishop.

His great liking for the place dated from that time, and it is said that Mrs. Fitzherbert inspired it. That is tradition only, but it is a fact that Mrs. Fitzherbert was devoted to Brighton; that she, more than any one else, confirmed the fickle Prince in his attachment to the place; and that his presence and her influence promoted the prosperity of the town. Thus to Mrs. Fitzherbert, equally with the Prince of Wales, Brighton was indebted for more than half-a-century of popularity in the world of fashion almost unparalleled in the history of an English seaside place.

The Brighton of Mrs. Fitzherbert's day was not ungrateful to her. She was always welcomed there with respect, and to the end of her long life that respect never wavered. It was something quite apart from her connection with the Prince, though the Prince himself was most popular with the honest folk of Brighton; they shouted themselves hoarse whenever he came; and whatever he did they, at least, were not disposed to be hard upon his follies.

The Prince and Mrs. Fitzherbert passed the summer of 1786 very quietly at Brighton. The Prince entertained little, and kept up no state. The wilder spirits among his friends were absent. Only Sheridan and a few others were there.

The Prince superintended the improvements in the Pavilion (as they were so near completion they were not stopped like those at Carlton House). He walked with Mrs. Fitzherbert daily on the broad open space between the Pavilion gardens and the sea, known as the Steine. This became the fashionable parade, where during the next half-

century might be met at various times nearly all the most celebrated men and women in England—all the princes politicians, beauties, and beaux that made up the brilliant society of the later Georgian era The Prince mixed freely with the throng on the Steine, chatting with those whom he knew and bowing and smiling to the promenaders with affability and good nature

The Prince was now quite a reformed character under the influence of Mrs Fitzherbert he drank less gambled not at all moderated his language, and seemed in every way determined to lead a new life "People talked much of the Prince of Wales's reform, particularly in this spot which he has chosen as the place of his retreat wrote the Earl of Mornington to the Duke of Rutland July 18 1786[1] 'Mrs Fitzherbert is here he added, "and they say with child This rumour, which was generally credited at that time, had no foundation in fact.

The marked improvement in the Prince's mode of life was well known at Windsor, but it made no difference to the hostility of the King and Queen In August 1786, Mary Nicholson a madwoman made an attempt to stab the King when he was alighting from his carriage The moment the Prince heard the news he posted off to Windsor to offer his congratulations to his father on his escape, but the King refused to see him though he was in the next room to that in which the Queen received her son Mrs Fitzherbert's great desire was to bring about a reconciliation between the Prince and

[1] Rutland Papers, op cit

his father. It was her theory that, if the Prince would only persist for a period in his plan of retrenchment and reform, the King's heart would surely soften towards him. The Prince, who knew the King better than she did, declared that his father would never help him. But he was so much under Mrs. Fitzherbert's good influence at this time, and so happy in her society, that he did whatever she wished.

CHAPTER X

DENIAL OF THE MARRIAGE

(1787)

THE Prince of Wales was very little in London during the winter of 1786–1787. He was too poor to be at Carlton House, and he lived for the most part in houses lent to him, like that of the Duke of Gloucester's at Bagshot, and Lord North's at Bushey. He was very hard pressed for money. The Duke of Orleans, always his evil counsellor, urged him to accept a substantial loan. The Duke of Portland heard of it in Paris, and wrote in great alarm to Sheridan, who consulted Mrs. Fitzherbert. They both exerted themselves to prevent the Prince from receiving aid from a foreign prince, and successfully. They urged that he only had to wait a little longer, for public opinion was slowly declaring itself on his side

The Prince had now persisted in his plan of economy for six months. His small debts were all settled, and a dividend of nine per cent. on the larger ones had been paid. The strained relations between the King and his son had become a public scandal, and reflected on the credit of the dynasty. The Prince's friends, and indeed many men on both sides of politics, thought it was time that this state of affairs ended. But the obstinacy of the

King, and the reluctance of responsible politicians to intrude into what was primarily a family quarrel, seemed to render any private settlement impossible.

Early in 1787 a meeting of the Prince's political friends and supporters was held at Mr. Pelham's, to discuss the situation. The Prince was present. Some were for bringing the Prince's debts before Parliament, but the majority were opposed to it. The discussion was superficial, for in the minds of all was the question whether the Prince was married to Mrs. Fitzherbert or not. The real obstacle in the way of a Parliamentary settlement lay in the dread of a public discussion of his alleged marriage. Every one present knew this, but the subject was not so much as hinted at. It is no wonder, therefore, that the conference broke up without coming to any decision. The Duke of Portland and all of the Whig leaders, except Fox and Sheridan, were opposed to pledging the party to support the Prince. They knew how profoundly the Protestant feeling in the country had been stirred by the rumour of his secret marriage to a Roman Catholic, and they feared that they would seem to condone his action by advocating his case in Parliament. They could not understand the attitude of Fox, who was generally astute in reading the signs of the times. He was the Prince's chosen friend and mentor, and bound to him by special ties. Yet instead of joining with the great Whig Lords in deprecating any discussion of the subject, he stood apart and kept his own counsel. He had resolved upon independent action, and consulted neither the Prince nor his political friends. He carried in his pocket,

unknown to any save himself, the Prince's evasive letter of denial, written on the eve of his marriage to Mrs Fitzherbert That letter was sufficient for Fox's purpose, and there is no evidence to show that after he received it he spoke to the Prince again on the subject The Prince, we may be sure, did not mention the matter to him, for he never voluntarily alluded to unpleasant topics Yet the papers were full of the marriage, and just at this awkward moment that eccentric politician, Horne Tooke, added fuel to the flame of public curiosity by publishing his celebrated pamphlet on "The Reported Marriage of the Prince of Wales," in which, after treating the Royal Marriage Act with not unusual contempt, he wound up by declaring "It is not from the debates in either House of Parliament that the public will receive any solid or useful information on a point of so much importance to the nation to the Sovereign on the throne, to his royal successor, and to a most amiable and justly valued Female Character whom I conclude to be in all respects both *legally* really, worthily, *and happily for this country*, her Royal Highness the Princess of Wales [1]

Though the Prince maintained silence on the all-important subject of his marriage, he must have known what was in the minds of all his friends He knew also why the Whig leaders refused to champion his cause, but he affected

[1] "A Letter to a Friend on the Reported Marriage of His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales." By J Horne Tooke London, 1787

John Horne Tooke (1736–1812), politician and pamphleteer an ex-clergyman, was returned for Old Sarum 1801, but was prevented from taking his seat in the House by an Act passed for declaring clergymen ineligible.

ignorance, and quarrelled with the Duke of Portland because he would not support his application to Parliament. But still the Prince persisted in his resolution of bringing the question of his debts before Parliament, in some form or other, and since the Whigs as a party would not take up the matter, it was resolved to entrust it to an independent member. Such a one was found in Alderman Newnham, member of Parliament for the city of London, a man of high repute in financial circles, though not of great weight in the House. The Tories said that social ambition was the reason of Newnham's championing this unpopular cause, but there appears no reason to doubt his sincerity.

On April 20, 1787, *Alderman Newnham* rose in the House of Commons to ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (*Mr. Pitt*)—

"Whether it was the design of the Ministers to bring forward any proposition to rescue the Prince of Wales from his present very embarrassed condition? for though he thought that His Royal Highness's conduct, during his difficulties, had reflected greater honour and glory on his character than the most splendid diadem in Europe had upon the wearer of it, yet it must be very disagreeable to His Royal Highness to be deprived of those comforts and enjoyments which so properly belonged to his high rank."[1]

Mr. Pitt answered: "That as it was not his duty to bring forward a subject of such a nature as that suggested by the hon. gentleman except at the

[1] "Parliamentary History," vol. xxvi. (1786–1788), from which the following quotations and account of the debates are mainly taken.

command of his Majesty, it was not necessary for him to say more in reply to the question than that he had not been honoured with such a command."

Alderman Newnham then gave notice that he should bring forward a motion on May 4.

This announcement caused considerable perturbation in the minds of the King and his Ministers who were anxious to prevent a discussion which could reflect no credit on any one concerned in it. They could not understand the Prince's move, for they had always felt confident that he would not force matters to a crisis, lest the subject of his marriage should be brought forward. But since he was not amenable to reason, it was resolved to see what veiled threats would do. Instead, therefore, of waiting for events to follow their usual course and leaving the matter to be discussed on May 4, four days after Alderman Newnham's notice (on April 24), Pitt suddenly sprang the subject on a crowded House.

Mr. Pitt said: "That perceiving the House was so full, he would take the opportunity of al[illegible] a subject of the highest importance in itself and of the greatest novelty, which of all others [illegible] the greatest delicacy which could possibly [illegible] in its discussion. He wished to know [illegible] and tendency of the motion coming on [illegible] and whether the honourable magistrate [illegible] persevere with it."

But *Alderman Newnham* was [illegible] After a [illegible] consultation [illegible] answered:—

"Th[illegible]

gentleman had phrased it, to force forward the subject of the Prince of Wales's situation. It in fact forced *itself* forward, but he should have been extremely well pleased to have had the matter taken out of his hands by his Majesty's Ministers. As to the particular parliamentary form which it would wear, it really had not been decided upon by himself, but the object of it he had no objection to state, as it was to rescue his Royal Highness from his present embarrassed situation."

In this he was supported by Fox, who thought he saw a sign of weakness in Pitt's thus bringing forward the subject.

Mr. Fox said: "That he entirely agreed with the right honourable gentleman that it was a subject of peculiar novelty, but so were the circumstances that gave rise to it, and it was also of equal delicacy, but as that delicacy would arise from the necessity of going into an investigation of the causes from which these circumstances originated, for that must prove a painful work to the House, . . . he hoped that the business might be forestalled, and something done in the interim to render it unnecessary for the honourable magistrate to prosecute his intention."

Mr. Pitt answered: "He admitted that the principal delicacy of the question would lie in *the necessity for inquiring into the causes of the circumstances* which were proposed to be brought into discussion, and for that reason he would, from his profound respect for every part of the illustrious family who were concerned in it, wish if possible to avoid discussion. If the honourable magistrate

should determine to bring it forward he would, however distressing it might be to him, as an individual, discharge his duty to the public, and enter *fully* into the subject."

Pitt spoke with meaning, and there was a veiled threat in his words which caused a considerable sensation in the House. Every one understood what Pitt meant when he spoke of the "necessity of inquiring into the causes." But the Prince's friends deemed it best to ignore the menace at the time, and the subject dropped.

Three days later, on April 27, *Alderman Newnham* again brought forward the subject. After reminding the House of what had passed, and regretting that the Ministers had done nothing in the meanwhile to meet the Prince's wishes, he moved:—

"That an humble address be presented to his Majesty, praying him to take into his royal consideration the present embarrassed state of affairs of his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, and to grant him such relief as his royal wisdom should think fit, and that the House would make good the same."

Before Pitt could rise to reply to this challenge an interruption came from an unexpected quarter, where from below the gangway on the Ministerial side of the House sat, in solid phalanx, the Tory squires. Their mouthpiece was Rolle,[1] one of the members

[1] John Rolle (1750–1842), M.P. for Devonshire, had entered Parliament in 1780 as a supporter of Pitt. In 1796 he was created Lord Rolle. He was the aged peer who stumbled on the steps of Queen Victoria's throne when he offered homage at her Coronation. He was twice married; his second wife survived him for many years, and died so lately as 1885.

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of Parliament for the county of Devon. Rolle was a typical country squire, uncouth in person, rough in manners, halting in speech, impervious either to bribery or flattery, and noted for his sturdy independence. He was the hero of that satirical effusion the "Rolliad," and an avowed enemy of Fox. No sooner had Alderman Newnham sat down than *Mr. Rolle* rose, and, speaking with dogged emphasis and a broad Devonshire accent, said:—

"If ever there was a question which called particularly upon the attention of that class of persons, the country gentlemen, it would be the question which the honourable Alderman had declared his determination to agitate, *because it was a question which went immediately to affect our Constitution in Church and State.* Whenever it should be brought forward he would rise the moment the honourable Alderman sat down and move the previous question, being convinced that it ought not to be discussed."

Rolle's words made a profound impression on the House, especially on the Ministerial benches. Rolle represented the most influential section of the Tory party, the country squires, those staunch upholders of the Established Church, who were noted for their strong dislike of Nonconformists, both Roman Catholics and Protestant Dissenters.

Fox was unaccountably absent from this discussion. He said afterwards that he did not know the matter was to be brought forward on that day, but surely he must have known it, as he was in close touch with Alderman Newnham. But Sheridan was present, and he represented in an especial manner the Prince of Wales. He threw himself

into the breach, and strove in vain to remove the impression made by Rolle's words, by affecting not to understand their meaning.

Mr. Sheridan said: "He differed much from those who represented that alarming consequences might ensue from the present motion, and that the existence of Church and State was endangered by its agitation: he did not well know what precise meaning to affix to expressions of this kind, but he was well convinced that the motion originated only in a consciousness of the unparalleled difficulties under which the heir to the Crown was so long suffered to labour. . . . Whatever was brought forward he knew would meet with an unequivocal and complete reply, such as he was assured his Royal Highness would himself give, as a peer of Great Britain, were a question of this nature to be agitated in another House. How far such a discussion might be proper he left to the feeling of the gentleman to whom he alluded to decide."

But the sturdy Rolle would have no ambiguity. *Mr. Rolle* rose again to declare that: "If a motion were urged, which he thought highly improper to be proposed, the honourable gentleman would find he would not flinch from it, but act as became an independent country gentleman to act upon such an occasion, and state without reserve his sentiments, according as the matter struck him. He would do his duty."

Pitt now thought fit to intervene. From his seat on the Ministerial bench he had seen the impression which Rolle's words had produced, and the confusion they had wrought among the Prince's friends

and he availed himself of the opportunity. He hoped to frighten the Alderman into withdrawing his motion. Therefore, speaking with great deliberation, and emphasising his meaning with significant gestures—

Mr. Pitt said: "He was very much concerned that, by the perseverance of the hon. member (*Newnham*), he should be driven, though with infinite reluctance, *to the disclosure of circumstances which he should otherwise think it his duty to conceal.*" (Sensation.) "Whenever the motion should be agitated he was ready to avow his determined and fixed resolution to give it his absolute negative."

There could be no doubt about Pitt's meaning, and when he sat down several members of Parliament rose one after another, deprecated the motion, and urged Alderman Newnham to withdraw it. But the Alderman made no sign, and presently Sheridan rose again. So far from yielding, he was quick to seize the advantage of Pitt's indiscreet speech. A license, which might be allowed in a private member of Parliament like Rolle, could hardly be permitted in a Minister of the Crown. Speaking with great warmth—

Mr. Sheridan said: "He was unable to comprehend why the notice of this motion should have produced any alarm amongst the country members, who must be aware that the Prince should not be suffered to continue in such embarrassed circumstances. . . . Some honourable gentlemen had thought proper to express their anxious wishes that the business should be deferred, but the Chancellor of the Exchequer (Pitt) had erected an insuperable barrier to such

a step. It would then seem to the country, to all Europe, that the Prince had yielded to terror what he had denied to argument. What could the world think of such conduct, but that he fled from inquiry and dared not face his accusers? But if such was the design of these threats, he believed they would find that the author of them had as much mistaken the feelings as the conduct of the Prince."

Sheridan's speech was nothing but a piece of bluff. He knew that Pitt either would not, or could not, prove his words, and he wished to force him to withdraw them. Pitt had only uttered his threat in the hope of forcing a withdrawal of the motion. When he saw that the Prince's friends were determined to brave the matter out, he was for the moment nonplussed, and knew not what to reply. The Speaker came to his aid by calling up a member of Parliament to present a petition which he had in his hand, and the House proceeded with the business of the day.

But the matter could hardly be allowed to rest thus. The excitement in the lobbies was great. Members gathered in little groups discussing Pitt's words, and wondering what answer he would make to Sheridan's defiance. Meanwhile, Pitt had a hasty consultation with his colleagues. It was recognised that his threat had failed to produce the desired effect, and that he had unwittingly given advantage to his opponents. Later in the evening, therefore, the Prime Minister reopened the question, this time with a speech that was painfully like an equivocation.

Mr. Pitt said: "He wished to remove the

possibility of misinterpretation, especially as the hon. gentleman (*Mr. Sheridan*) had stated that the insinuations which had been thrown out made it impossible for the friends of the Prince of Wales to withdraw their motion. The particulars to which he alluded, and which he should think it necessary to state more fully to the House, related *only to the pecuniary embarrassments* of the Prince of Wales, and to a correspondence that had taken place on the subject, and this had no reference to any *extraneous circumstances*."

But Sheridan had no intention of letting him off so easily. He rubbed in Pitt's disavowal.

Mr. Sheridan said: "He was extremely glad the right hon. gentleman had explained himself, because, undoubtedly, as he left the matter, the interpretation of the right hon. gentleman's declaration had been the very construction which he had now so fully cleared himself from having had any intention to convey. As to *that* matter, any sort of allusion to it would have been in the extremest degree indelicate and disrespectful."

Sheridan went that same night to Carlton House and told the Prince what had passed. The Prince was greatly perturbed, and his perturbation only slightly lessened when the next morning Pitt sent for Lord Southampton, repeated to him his recantation in the House the previous day, and asked him, in effect, to explain to the Prince that he had not meant what he said. The Prince adroitly seized the advantage, and returned to Pitt a haughty answer, "that he never received verbal messages except from the King." But though Pitt might

be muzzled, there remained Rolle to be reckoned with, and he was determined to bring the matter of the Prince's reputed marriage to a Roman Catholic before the notice of the House at the first opportunity. Behind Rolle were the country gentlemen, and behind them again was the Protestant feeling of the country. The Prince could not hope to stand up against the storm. Deserted as he was by many of his political friends, with the King against him, and the Government avowedly hostile, he thought that to avow his marriage to a Roman Catholic at this juncture would be to imperil his succession to the Crown. The Prince was not prepared to make such a sacrifice. Yet after the pointed allusions made to the secret marriage in the House, it was not possible to fight the question any longer with gloves. It would have to be met with either avowal or disavowal. The Prince, as usual, sought refuge in sophistry. The marriage was not legal. Therefore it was no marriage; for him it did not exist, since it left him free. Mrs. Fitzherbert, he knew, would never betray him, whatever happened; the clergyman and the witnesses could be trusted to keep their own counsel, for over them hung the mysterious threat of *premunire* and its penalties. The marriage could be safely denied; therefore, he argued, he was free to deny it.

Yet when the Prince thought of his wife, whom he loved more than any other being in the world, some remorse seems to have crossed his mind. Sheridan, who enjoyed the friendship of them both, was sent to sound Mrs. Fitzherbert on the subject, and to prepare her for the worst. She did not

know of the letter the Prince had written to Fox before the marriage, nor probably did Sheridan. Neither had Sheridan the courage to tell her definitely that the marriage would be denied, but he said that it was probable that some explanation would be required by Parliament of her connection with the Prince; and he impressed upon her the extreme difficulty of the Prince's position in the matter, and the necessity of secrecy. It was easy to work upon her fears, for the perils of the Prince's situation, and the dread of Protestant prejudice, were ever present with her. The unhappy lady seems to have realised her danger, for she told Sheridan that "they knew she was like a dog with a log tied round its neck, and they must protect her."[1] Sheridan, of course, was ready to promise anything and everything to calm her, but he left her with a presentiment of evil to come. Her fears were not unfounded. This time the Prince had fully made up his mind that the marriage must be treated as non-existent, and if the question were raised in Parliament, his friends must be prepared to meet it with denial.

Fox, for one, was determined that the denial should not lack completeness. More than any one else, his popularity had suffered. Without a shadow of truth he had been accused of conniving at the Prince's secret marriage with a Roman Catholic. Everything which unscrupulous opponents could do to convey this impression to the people had been done; paragraphs in the press had accused him of being privy to the marriage, and caricatures

[1] Langdale, *op. cit*

and cartoons innumerable had depicted him as assisting at a ceremony of which he knew nothing, and against which he had protested in vain. These accusations had been going on for nearly a year, and he determined to answer them once for all. He had the Prince's letter, and that was enough for his purpose. Whether the marriage had taken place or not was beside the point. It had been denied to him by the Prince in writing, and he did not seek to go behind that denial. Moreover, he did not feel in any way called upon to shield Mrs. Fitzherbert from the consequences of her folly. Fox was always loyal to his friends, perhaps too loyal; but Mrs. Fitzherbert was not his friend. They had nothing in common—he did not understand her or sympathise with her, and she, though she was discretion itself, had an instinctive dislike of him. His blasphemies shocked her, his loose morals revolted her, and his excessive drinking and gambling disgusted her. She feared that in these matters he had a bad influence over the Prince. Perhaps, too, Fox was a little jealous of her. Since the Prince's connection with Mrs. Fitzherbert, the frank comradeship between him and his "dear Charles" had gone, and though the Prince declared himself as devoted as ever to his friend, the old intimacy had ceased. Fox would have been less than human if he had not attributed some of this falling off to Mrs. Fitzherbert. In a crisis like the present, therefore, he conceived that his duty was only to the Prince; he owed no consideration to Mrs. Fitzherbert. With these thoughts in his mind he resolved to act. To say this is not to

place Fox altogether in the wrong, for he had authority for what he stated. But it shows that in what followed the Prince was not wholly to blame.

It was announced that Alderman Newnham was to bring forward his motion on April 30. On that day the House of Commons was crowded, and everywhere within its precincts there reigned an air of subdued excitement. Fox was in his place, fortified doubtless for the coming fray by an extra bottle of port, and the Prince's friends, such as Sheridan, Grey, and others, were gathered around him. When the Alderman rose to propose his motion, his opening words showed that the Prince's friends meant to present a bold front.

Alderman Newnham said: "On Friday last, much personal application had been made to him from various quarters of the House to press him to forego his purpose, and much had been said of the dangerous consequences which might result from the discussion of such a subject. One gentleman had gone so far as to contend that it would draw on questions affecting Church and State. That expression, coupled with certain hints which fell from the Chancellor of the Exchequer (*Mr. Pitt*), had induced him, as well as other members, to suspect that in order to deter him from persisting in bringing forward this motion, matters of singular delicacy were to be agitated without reserve. The Chancellor of the Exchequer had indeed explained his meaning in a way satisfactory to the House, and in his opinion, the gentleman who had made use of the expressions relative to Church and State



CHARLES JAMES FOX

was bound as a man of honour to come to an open explanation of what he meant by the allusion."

Mr. Fox rose immediately after Mr. Newnham had concluded his remarks. He began with an apology for his absence on the previous occasion: "Not having heard that a subject of so much delicacy and importance was likely to be at all alluded to on Friday last, he had not come down to the House on that day. *On a former occasion* he had heard the Chancellor of the Exchequer throw out certain hints which appeared to his mind extremely like a menace, and that of a very extraordinary nature, but those hints had, he understood, on Friday last been much narrowed by explanation, and confined to certain correspondence and letters which had passed on the subject without doors. . . . He desired it to be understood, not as speaking lightly but as speaking from the immediate authority of the Prince of Wales, when he assured the House that there was no part of his Royal Highness' conduct that he was either afraid or unwilling to have investigated in the most minute manner. With regard to the private correspondence alluded to, he wished to have it laid before the House, because it would prove that the conduct of his Royal Highness had been in the highest degree amiable, and would present an uniform and a perfect picture of duty and obedience, so much so as ever, in any instance, had been shown from a son to his father, or from a subject to his Sovereign. With regard to the debt, which was the cause of his embarrassments, his Royal Highness, if the House would deem it necessary, was willing to give an account in

members of that House, it proved at once the uncommon pains taken by the enemies of his Royal Highness to propagate the grossest and most malignant falsehoods with a view to depreciate his character and injure him in the opinion of his country When he (*Mr Fox*) considered that his Royal Highness was the first subject in the kingdom and the immediate heir to the throne, he was at a loss to imagine what species of party it was which could have fabricated so *base and scandalous a calumny* Had there existed in the kingdom such a faction as an anti Brunswick faction to that faction he should have certainly imputed the invention of *so malicious a falsehood* for he knew not what other description of men could feel an interest in first forming and then circulating with more than ordinary assiduity a tale in every particular so *unfounded and for which there was not the shadow of anything like reality*

"This being the fact, and as the occasion had made it necessary for him to declare as much he hoped it would have this good effect upon the House and upon the country, that it would teach both the one and the other to distrust the reports circulated to the prejudice of the Prince, and lessen any opinion that they might in consequence take up injurious to the character of his Royal Highness, who might be said to be a person in whose fair fame that House and the country were deeply interested The whole of the debt the Prince was ready to submit to the investigation of the House, and he was equally ready to submit the other circumstance to which he had alluded to their consideration provided the consideration of a House

of Parliament could, with consistency, with propriety and decency, be applied to such a subject. Nay, his Royal Highness had authorised him to declare that, as a peer of Parliament, he was ready in the other House to submit to any, the most pointed questions, which could be put to him respecting it, or to afford his Majesty or his Majesty's Ministers the fullest assurances of *the utter falsehood of the fact in question*, which never had, and common sense must see, never *could* have happened."

Half the House had listened to Fox's remarks with incredulity, the other with a sense of relief. When he sat down a buzz of eager comment broke forth, which was hushed as Pitt rose. The great Minister was more than usually cold, frigid, and contemptuous; his calmness contrasting markedly with the impassioned demeanour of Fox.

Mr. Pitt said: "He should not at present enter into a debate upon the question." He rebuked Mr. Fox for his "hints and insinuations against a person unnamed (the King). As the right hon. gentleman did not choose to point his own charge against any individual, he should not point it for him." Of Rolle he said that he, "with the zeal that became a good subject, interposed, in common with many other respectable members, with his entreaties to the hon. magistrate, not to force the House to the discussion of a subject which was of all others to be most avoided, and which he looked upon himself as bound in duty to the public, to the Prince, and to the Sovereign, to prevent if possible."

It will be seen that Pitt made no allusion to Fox's denial of Mrs. Fitzherbert's marriage to the

be proper. The right hon. gentleman had certainly *answered* him, and the House would judge for themselves of the propriety of the answer."

Mr. Sheridan observed that: "The hon. gentleman after having put a pointed question and received an immediate answer, was bound in honour and fairness either to declare that he was satisfied, or to take some means of putting the matter into such a state of inquiry as would satisfy him. To remain silent, or to declare that the House would judge for themselves after what had passed, was neither manly nor candid. If, therefore, the hon. gentleman did not choose to say that he was satisfied, the House ought to come to a resolution that it was seditious and disloyal to propagate reports injurious to the character of the Prince of Wales, and thus by authority discountenance the reports."

Mr. Rolle maintained his attitude. He said that "he had not invented these reports, but merely said that he had heard them, and that they had made an impression on his mind."

Mr. Pitt then felt forced to intervene on behalf of his supporter. He observed that "he had never heard so direct an attack upon the freedom of debate and liberty of speech in that House ever since he had sat in Parliament. . . . The hon. gentleman (Mr. Sheridan), who took so warm a part in the business on the other side of the House, should rather be obliged to the hon. member (Mr. Rolle) who was the first to suggest a question which had been the means of bringing forward so explicit a declaration on so interesting a subject, and one which must give complete satisfaction not only

as law. The fact not only never could have happened legally, but *never did happen in any way whatsoever*, and had from the beginning been a base and malicious falsehood."

Mr. Rolle then asked: "Whether in what had fallen from the right hon. gentleman he had spoken from direct authority."

Mr. Fox declared that "he had spoken from *direct authority*."

Against a denial so sweeping there could be no appeal. At least, so it seemed to another independent member, *Sir Edward Astley*, who said: "It gave him great pleasure to hear from such high authority direct contradiction of a report which had been so freely circulated in newspapers, and made the subject of an infinite number of prints, that it had affected a very great and general impression on the public."

But Rolle sat silent and unbelieving. The matter might have dropped there had not Sheridan, who perhaps feared that Rolle would raise the subject again, tried to wring from him an admission that he was satisfied.

Mr. Sheridan said that: "It would be extremely unhandsome in the hon. gentleman (Mr. Rolle), who had called upon his right hon. friend (Mr. Fox) to say whether he spoke from direct authority or not, to sit silent after having received so explicit an answer."

Rolle's answer showed how little he believed Fox.

Mr. Rolle replied: "That nothing the hon. gentleman (Sheridan) could say would induce him to act otherwise than to his judgment should appear to

be proper. The right hon. gentleman had certainly *answered* him, and the House would judge for themselves of the propriety of the answer."

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to the hon. gentleman himself but to the whole House."

Still Sheridan persevered. Perhaps he wanted to know exactly how much Rolle knew on the subject.

Mr. Sheridan "denied that he wished to infringe on the liberty of debate, and he would appeal to the House whether under such circumstances it was honourable and manly, fair or candid, for the hon. gentleman (Mr. Rolle) to remain silent, and whether he ought not either to declare that he was satisfied, or to resort to means of ascertaining the facts; for it was adding in a tenfold degree to the malicious falsehood which had been propagated against his Royal Highness, to say that the Prince had authorised a false denial of the fact. The right hon. gentleman (Mr. Pitt) had himself been obliged to assume that 'the hon. member must be satisfied since he had never acknowledged that he was so.'" All, however, Sheridan could wring from Rolle was a curt answer that "the hon. gentleman had not heard him say that he was *not* satisfied."

Mr. Grey then broke in to the debate. He supported Mr. Sheridan, and denounced the conduct of Rolle to be "both unmanly and ungenerous. If that hon. gentleman had not received complete satisfaction, the House, he believed, had." Grey next attacked Pitt for his conduct of this business, and for "the veiled hints and menaces he had thrown out last week."

Mr. Pitt in the most positive manner again "disclaimed any idea or intention of threat or menace—he deprecated discussion of questions of so delicate a nature, and asked every gentleman, to whom the

harmony and happiness of the kingdom was dear, to join with him in so deprecating "

At this point the subject dropped, and the House adjourned [1]

Thus was Mrs Fitzherbert forsworn, and the wrong done to her then was never set right in her lifetime.

[1] "Parliamentary History Hansard, London, 1816, vol xxvi

CHAPTER XI

SHERIDAN'S APOLOGY

(1787)

WHO was responsible for Fox's denial in the House of Commons of the marriage between the Prince of Wales and Mrs. Fitzherbert? The question even now is one of considerable difficulty. Fox's apologists declare that he must have believed what he said to be true, as he was incapable of uttering a falsehood. The detractors of the Prince of Wales aver that he was wholly to blame; in their opinion the Prince's perfidy was double-dyed, for he not only lied to his friend, but betrayed the wife of his bosom. The truth will probably be found to lie between these two extremes. Both Fox and the Prince were in a sense responsible. There is little doubt that when Fox declared that he spoke "with direct authority" he alluded to the letter which the Prince wrote to him four days before his marriage. The Prince in his answer to Fox said: "Believe me, the world will soon be convinced that there *not only* is [not] but never was, any ground for these reports which of late have been so malevolently circulated."[1] Fox, in his speech, spoke of "malicious falsehoods" and "malignant calumnies," thus using much the same words as the Prince had used in his letter.

[1] Letter from the Prince of Wales to Mr. Fox, December 11, 1785.

As late as May 10 (ten days after the scene in the House of Commons) we find affectionate letters passing between them on the subject of the Prince's debts. If Fox had been so virtuously indignant as his admirers represent him to have been, he would certainly have thrown up the whole affair, and let the Prince get his debts paid as best he could. But Fox knew too well the unstable character of his royal friend to have been greatly surprised at this revelation of his shiftiness. He may have felt indignant at the trick played on him, but his indignation was probably seasoned with a cynical amusement. The Prince's letter denying his marriage, though it was written before the marriage took place, had served Fox's purpose; it had enabled him to publicly deny the fact from "direct authority"; it had served to clear him and the Whig leaders from the suspicion of having been privy to it, and it had greatly relieved the minds of his followers in the House of Commons, whose allegiance had been sorely strained. Sir Gilbert Elliot, for instance, writes that he had been much distressed by "the constitutional dangers and doubts belonging to this most equivocal condition of things"; he thought the Prince had committed a "heavy offence," all too serious to be excused "by *levity* or the *passions* of youth." He rejoiced, therefore, to hear the charge denied so definitely. "Fox," he says, "declared by authority from the Prince, in the fullest and most unequivocal manner, that there was not the smallest foundation of any sort for the story of the marriage with Mrs. Fitzherbert . . . and in a word denied, positively from the Prince himself, the whole of this slander in words so strong and so

unqualified that we must believe him I think yesterday was a very good day for the Prince, as the story of Mrs. Fitzherbert was what staggered great numbers." He adds "This conversation leaves Mrs Fitzherbert in an awkward way, but for my own part I feel much better satisfied with her conduct now than I did before"[1]—surely a dark saying Fox was too astute a politician not to be aware of the advantage he had gained for himself and his party by his uncompromising denial Nothing could be further from his thoughts than to sacrifice the effect of his words by any consideration for Mrs. Fitzherbert The burden of the falsehood did not rest on his shoulders, but on those of the Prince.

The Prince found the burden heavy enough. During the progress of the debate in the House of Commons on the eventful evening of April 30 the Prince was kept informed of all that passed. Messengers were continually going to and fro between Carlton House and Westminster Immediately the debate was over, Sheridan and Grey went to see him. They must have told him of Fox's denial of the marriage, though they probably did not tell him of the strong words which Fox had used. The Prince seems to have acquiesced without protest; he was glad that the danger was over We find him writing to Fox at twelve o'clock the same evening, making an appointment to see him next morning

"April 30, 1787,
Monday night, 12 o'clock

"MY DEAR CHARLES,—I beg to see you for five minutes to-morrow after I have seen Marsham and

[1] "Life and Letters of Sir Gilbert Elliot," op. cit.

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"My dear Charles [illegible] minutes to-morrow [illegible] [illegible]

Powys, whom I beg you will desire to be at Carlton House at one o'clock to-morrow. When I see you I will relate to you what has passed between my Friend and me relative to y^e seeing you. I feel more comfortable by Sheridan and Grey's account of what has passed to-day. I have had a distant insinuation that some sort of message, or terms, are to be proposed to me to-morrow. If you come a little after two you will be sure to find me.—Ever affectionately yours,

"George P."

From this letter it would seem that the Prince took, or affected to take, the matter lightly. The thought uppermost was not the betrayal of Mrs. Fitzherbert, but the payment of his debts. All the same, the Prince was not easy in his mind as to how Mrs. Fitzherbert would take the news, and he certainly did a wise thing in telling her of it himself at the earliest opportunity. Mrs. Fitzherbert had then no town-house, and was staying "with her friend and relative the Hon. Mrs. Butler." "The Prince," we are told, "called the morning after the denial of the marriage in the House of Commons by Mr. Fox. He went up to Mrs. Fitzherbert, and taking hold of both her hands and caressing her, said, 'Only conceive, Maria, what Fox did yesterday. He went down to the House and denied that you and I were man and wife! Did you ever hear of such a thing?' Mrs. Fitzherbert made no reply, but changed countenance and turned pale."[1] She knew instinctively that her fate was sealed, and what

[1] Langdale, *op. cit.*

this public repudiation meant to her. Her silence doubtless moved the Prince more than any words. Tears were always ready to spring to his eyes and vows and protestations to his lips. He proceeded to disavow Fox to her and all his works.

The denial of the marriage was serious enough in itself, but when, later in the day, Mrs. Fitzherbert became aware of the terms in which Fox had made that denial, and how he had left her no loophole to escape from a shameful situation, compromising alike her religion and her honour, her indignation and reproaches knew no bounds. She saw herself not only cruelly betrayed but publicly degraded. "This public degradation of Mrs. Fitzherbert," says Lord Stourton, "so compromised her character and religion, and irritated her feelings, that she determined to break off all connection with the Prince, and she was only induced to receive him again into her confidence, by repeated assurances that Mr. Fox had never been authorised to make the declaration; and the friends of Mrs. Fitzherbert assured her, that in this discrepancy as to the assertion of Mr. Fox and the Prince, she was bound to accept the word of her husband."[1]

Mrs. Fitzherbert's dislike of Fox now [illegible]

[1] "I told her," adds Lord Stourton, [illegible] scrap of paper [illegible] [illegible] with [illegible] dirty scrap of paper [illegible] and that [illegible] which is [illegible] paper was [illegible] previous to the marriage [illegible] after his death.

into abhorrence, and she vowed that she never could, or would, forgive him. "She said," writes Sir Philip Francis, who later tried to make peace between them, "that, by his unauthorised declaration in the House of Commons, he had rolled her in the kennel like a street-walker; that he knew that every word he said was a lie; and so on, in a torrent of virulence which it was vain for me to encounter, so I gave up the point and made my retreat as well and as fast as I could."[1]

Nor did she forgive the Prince easily, though he swore to her that Fox had acted entirely without his authority. This of course was untrue, but it was true that he had no idea that Fox would use language so unnecessarily strong. When the Prince heard it he was greatly annoyed, and was eager to make all possible amends. He sent for Grey, who found the Prince tremendously agitated, and pacing in a hurried manner up and down the room. He at once explained his object in sending for Grey. It was to induce him to frame some sort of explanation for Fox's denial of his marriage the previous evening—to modify in some way the terms of that denial, so that Mrs. Fitzherbert might be pacified. "Charles certainly went too far last night," he said. "You, my dear Grey, shall explain it," and then in distinct tones,[2] though with prodigious agitation, owned that a ceremony had taken place. Grey observed that Fox must unquestionably suppose that he had authority for *all* he said; and that if there

1 "Memoirs of Sir Philip Francis."

2 "As Grey," adds Lord Holland, "has since the Prince's (George IV.'s) death assured me."



RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN

(After the Painting by Sir Joshua Reynolds)

[illegible]

The Prince [illegible] the [illegible] to smooth away the effect of [illegible] Prince had to be content [illegible] annoyed though he was with him [illegible] he was much too afraid to [illegible] at such a crisis. He must wait [illegible] until Fox had secured the payment of his debts by Parliament.

[illegible] of the Whig Party by Lord [illegible]

This matter proceeded apace. Both the King and Pitt felt that the bold stand taken by the Prince and his friends had cut the ground from beneath their feet. The Prince's necessities had extorted from him a complete denial of the marriage, and the King's own measure, the Royal Marriage Ac, had not been openly set at defiance. The price had been paid. What mattered it that its payment involved the sacrifice of a woman's honour? The King was now all complacence. Pitt sent a gracious message to the Prince full of explanations and apologies, to which the Prince haughtily replied in much the same terms as before, "He did not receive verbal messages, but if the Minister had any business with him he might come himself." This might have led to further unpleasantness had not the Duchess of Gordon diplomatically arranged matters. Pitt came to see the Prince and assured him of his goodwill. Compliments passed on both sides, and then Pitt went to the King. A Cabinet Council was held, and a message was sent to the Prince, that his wishes would be complied with.

On the strength of this assurance, on May 4, Alderman Newnham withdrew his motion in the House of Commons. We read:[1]—

"As soon as *Mr. Pitt* came into the House a profound silence took place, although there were upwards of four hundred members assembled. *Mr. Alderman Newnham* rose and said:—

"'Sir, I am extremely happy that the motion which I was to have had the honour of making

[1] "Parliamentary History," vol. xxvi., 1786–1788, from which the following quotations are taken.

to-day is no longer necessary, and it is with a most sincere and heartfelt satisfaction that I inform the House that I decline bringing it forward.'

"Expressions of joy and satisfaction were heard on all sides. *Mr. Drake* began with saying that 'as he was one who had joined his feeble voice'—as *Mr. Drake* had a most powerful voice, and always spoke uncommonly loud, there was a universal roar of laughter, in which *Mr. Drake*, with equal good humour, joined, then rallied by saying that 'undoubtedly his voice was not feeble by nature, but most feeble when weighed with the little importance of the person who possessed it. But he joined his *hearty* voice in congratulation, and declared his unfeigned joy in what had occurred. The excessive gladness of his heart was superior to eloquence, and the pleasantness of his sensations almost deprived him of the power of uttering his sentences intelligibly.'

"*Mr. Pitt* 'readily concurred in the joy which the hon. gentleman expressed.' *Mr. Fox* said 'that all must feel the highest satisfaction; but he added that it would remain to be seen by substantial acts whether their motion were necessary or not.' *Mr. Rolle* introduced into the general harmony a jarring note. 'He tempered his satisfaction by observing that if it should hereafter appear that any concession had been made, humiliating to the country or dishonourable in itself, he would be the first man to stand up and stigmatise it as it deserved.' *Mr. Pitt* 'assured him that it was not so.'"

Then Sheridan rose for the purpose of carrying out the delicate and difficult task with which the

Prince had entrusted him. He was "to say something" which, while it would leave Fox's denial of the marriage unimpaired, would yet soothe the irritated feelings of Mrs. Fitzherbert. To do this without bringing up Rolle was a feat which taxed even the ingenuity of Sheridan. However, he got through it creditably.

Mr. Sheridan began by saying that: "He could not but believe that there existed on that day but one feeling and one sentiment in the House, that of heartfelt satisfaction at the auspicious conclusion to which the business was understood to be brought . . . *Mr. Sheridan*, however, wished it to be understood that though his Royal Highness felt the most perfect satisfaction at the prospect before him . . . yet did he also desire it to be distinctly remembered that no attempt had at any time been made to screen any part of his conduct, actions, or situation, from their view; that he even offered to answer himself (in the House of Lords) any question that might be put to him. That no such idea had been pursued, that no such inquiry had been adopted, was a point which did credit to the decorum and dignity of Parliament." [So far all had been plain sailing, but now Sheridan came to the most delicate part of his task.] *Mr. Sheridan* continued: "But while his Royal Highness's feelings had been doubtless considered on the occasion, he must take the liberty of saying, however much some might think it a subordinate consideration, that there was *another Person* entitled in every honourable and delicate mind to the same attention, whom he would not otherwise attempt to

describe, or allude to, except to affirm that ignorance or vulgar malice alone could have persevered in attempting to injure one on whose conduct truth could fix no just reproach, and whose character claimed, and was entitled to, the truest and most general respect

Sheridan's words made a sensation in the House, but the accounts of how they were received differ His speech was followed, we are told in one account, by a murmur of general approval, and his remarks were felt to be in the best of taste On the other hand, Daniel Pulteney writes to the Duke of Rutland the same day,[1] May 4, 1787 "What Mrs Fitzherbert can do in her present embarrassed situation I cannot pretend to guess, but Sheridan attempted, very foolishly, to repair the statement respecting the marriage by saying to day in the House her situation was 'truly respectable,' at which every one smiled

Sheridan's explanation or apology, call it what we will, served to throw doubt on Fox's denial. It has been well said "Mr Fox had declared that a lady living with the Prince to all exterior appearance in the habits of matrimonial connection had not the sanction of any canonical forms to support her, whilst, on the other hand, Sheridan reversed the picture, by representing her as a paragon of chastity, the possessor of every virtue, and the ornament of her sex"

Fox could not have been well pleased to hear Sheridan's encomiums But where women were concerned, he was always a cynic, and he appear-

[1] Rutland MSS, op. cit.

to have felt it his duty to let Sheridan's speech make no difference in his course of action, and to do his best to secure the payment of the Prince's debts. These debts were settled a few weeks later, after some further hesitation and delay, due, Pitt afterwards said, to the shiftiness of the King. George III. succeeded in the end in shelving the greater portion of them off his shoulders on to Parliament. A fresh schedule was prepared for the King "with the debts of honour left out," and on May 21, 1787, the Prime Minister brought down to the House the royal message recommending a discharge of the Prince of Wales's embarrassments on the strength of a "well-grounded expectation" that he would not contract debts in future. The House of Commons, in response, voted £161,000 in payment of the Prince's debts and £60,000 for the completion of Carlton House. The King on his part agreed to give the Prince another £10,000 a year out of his own Civil List.

The Prince hailed this relief with delight, though the increase to his income was too small to be of any real use, and the sum voted for Carlton House was only a third of what was necessary, and there was no grant for his new Pavilion at Brighton. But he probably regarded the Parliamentary grant only as an instalment which would serve to tide him over his present difficulty.

The prodigal son was now taken back to the paternal fold, and that all might see that peace was restored to the royal family, the reconciliation between the Prince of Wales and his parents was as public as their quarrel. The chief personages

in the Prince's household attended the drawing-room on May 24, and the King and Queen received them with great affability The next day the Prince had an interview with the King of three hours' duration, after which he was presented to his mother and sisters, everything was forgiven and all was harmony

By Mrs Fitzherbert the Prince was also forgiven, but she did not yield without difficulty Sheridan's speech in the House of Commons, though it had soothed her wounded feelings, had not satisfied her How could it do so? How could anything do so short of an avowal of the marriage as public as the denial? But even she saw that the political exigencies of the situation made this impossible Her first thought was to break off all connection with the Prince, and had she consulted her own dignity and happiness she would have done so For a time she would not see him, and he became quite ill from the agitation brought on by her refusal He had one of his violent paroxysms, and had to be bled Alarming rumours were circulated about his health of course greatly exaggerated "He is better to day, but still in great danger," wrote Thomas Orde to the Duke of Rutland, May 28, 1787[1] The Prince vowed he would kill himself unless Mrs Fitzherbert forgave him These manœuvres had the effect of persuading her—perhaps she was willing to be persuaded—that the Prince was not really to blame in the matter at all it was all the work of the wicked Fox. She yielded to the Prince's prayers and to the

[1] Rutland MSS, *op cit*

entreaties of their friends, and a reconciliation took place; but though of a forgiving disposition, she absolutely refused to forgive Fox, and made it a condition that she should not be forced to meet him. This the Prince could promise with safety, for Fox, disgusted with what he considered to be the Prince's ingratitude, and not caring to face Mrs. Fitzherbert, absented himself from Carlton House, and later went abroad.

Short of a public disavowal of Fox's speech the Prince did everything to cast a doubt upon the lie told in Parliament. It was understood among Mrs. Fitzherbert's intimates and his own, that the denial had been made for political purposes only, and, taking their cue from their royal master, the minions of Carlton House went about everywhere whispering that Fox had exceeded his instructions.

The reconciliation between the Prince and Mrs. Fitzherbert seems to have been effected after a few weeks, for Lord Ailesbury writes, May 25: "I met the Prince of Wales, as I went past the Queen's House, in his phaeton, in which I understood he took Mrs. Fitzherbert to Epsom races, and on his return, after a cold dinner, he was at the Duchess of Gordon's ball, where my daughter saw him dance. Mrs. Fitzherbert danced a good deal."[1]

Again we read of a grand ball and supper at Sir Sampson and Lady Gideon's. At supper Mrs. Fitzherbert sat with the Prince at the head of the table between her host and hostess. It was noticed

[1] "Diary of Thomas, Earl of Ailesbury." Ailesbury MSS. Historical MSS. Commission, vol. ii.

that she wore white roses in her hair and at her breast, all her intimate friends were present, and the company vied with each other in paying her homage This supper was facetiously known as the "Feast of Reconciliation' Such was the belief in the goodness of her character that she gained respect rather than lost it by Fox's denial of her marriage. "She informed me,' wrote Lord Stourton, "that the public supported her by their conduct on this occasion, for at no part of her life were their visits so numerous at her house as on the day which followed Mr Fox's memorable speech, and, to use her own expression, the knocker of her door was never still during the whole day" She was generally regarded as a cruelly injured woman, the victim of political expediency, Not only did her friends, like the Duchess of Cumberland and the Duchess of Devonshire, hasten to show their sympathy, but the Duchess of Portland, who had hitherto held aloof, and whose husband had quarrelled with the Prince, now called on Mrs Fitzherbert, and asked her to her house By so doing she showed to all that neither she nor the Duke believed what Fox had said Lord and Lady Sefton, who had hitherto avoided Mrs Fitzherbert since her marriage, followed suit. The Tory Duchess of Gordon, a great friend of Pitt's and of Queen Charlotte's, loudly proclaimed that Fox had lied, and showed her belief in Mrs Fitzherbert by inviting her to the ball already mentioned The Duke of Gloucester, the King's brother, who, with his Duchess, was at Florence, wrote to Mrs. Fitzherbert a little note, and sent her a present,

which, coming at this time, was of great significance:—

H.R.H. The Duke of Gloucester, to Mrs. Fitzherbert.

"FLORENCE, *May* 24, 1787.

"DEAR MADAM,—I take the opportunity of a private hand to desire your acceptance of a Cestus, done in oyster shell. I hope you will think it pretty. Pray send us by the safest opportunity some account to trust to of the present negotiation. I hope the Prince will be made easy in his affairs. I sincerely hope you are happy and well, for I know you deserve it. I remain, dear Madam, your humble Servant,

"WILLIAM HENRY."[1]

Thus the King's two brothers and their wives, and some of the greatest ladies of society, on both sides of politics, showed their sympathy with Mrs. Fitzherbert in this crisis, and no doubt it was their support which enabled her to bear with admirable temper and dignity the cruel imputation which had been cast upon her. The old Roman Catholic families, which included some of the greatest names in the peerage, rallied round her. They considered that she had been made to suffer on account of her religion. Even those who had though ther imprudent and unwise in consenting to such a marriage supported her now that the *fact* of the marriage was called into question. To the Archbishop of

[1] This letter was found among Mrs. Fitzherbert's papers after her death.

Canterbury it all seemed "very odd," particularly as he noted "the lady is more received than ever she was, and stands more forward." To those who accepted Fox's denial it was naturally "odd."

Though these were few in London society, among the general public they were numerous. And from them Mrs. Fitzherbert had to run the gauntlet of much ignorant criticism and public odium. Gillray published (May 21, 1787) a political print entitled "Dido Forsaken. *Sic transit Gloria Reginae.*" Mrs. Fitzherbert, grasping a crucifix, is seated all forlorn on a rock. A breeze blown by Pitt and Dundas carries away her coronet and feathers, as Princess of Wales. In a boat named *Honour*, bound for Windsor, sail away the Prince, Fox, who steers, Lord North, and Burke. The Prince says, "I never saw her in my life." Fox cries, "No, never in his life, damme." Burke and North echo, "No, never." On the ground lie fetters, an axe, rods, and a harrow "for the conversion of heretics" —another allusion to Mrs. Fitzherbert's religion, which, indeed, was the prime cause of all her troubles.

A great many ill-informed articles appeared in the English papers, unnecessary to be quoted here, but a French paper, *Le Courier de l'Europe*, which was supposed to represent in some measure the views of the foreign courts, contained the following venomous paragraph:—"La fable du prétendu marriage de S.A. Mgr. le Prince de Galles, a enfin été expliquée en plein Parlement de manière à ne plus laisser de doute. C'est une explication, qui est d'autant plus facheuse pour Mad. Fitz. que

l'on a supposé des liens entre S.A.R. et cette dame pour lesquels on n'avoit pas encore prononcés. Jusqu'ici Mad. F. a était reçue dans toutes les societés, où étoit invité le Prince, mais *il ne sera guère* possible aujourd'hui qu'elle jouisse les mêmes avantages, à moins que cette première explication n'en entraine une autre et que la prétendue intimité de S.A.R. ne soit presentée sous couleurs admissibles en bonne compagnie."

This paper, it will be seen, made no allusion to Sheridan's apology. In any case its forecast was wrong. Mrs. Fitzherbert was more generally received than before.

CHAPTER X[illegible]

A QUEEN OF [illegible]

(1787—178[illegible])

The Prince and Mrs. [illegible] earlier than usual this [illegible] of July found them at [illegible] Pavilion, and Mrs. [illegible] hard by. They were [illegible] pany. Marvellous was [illegible] year now wrought [illegible] filled to overflowing: [illegible] be had, and its [illegible] tolled to the skies. [illegible] in better health [illegible] his evening walks [illegible] "his company [illegible] the gentlemen of [illegible] the Countess of [illegible] Prince and Mrs. [illegible] the Steine, [illegible] Prince's friends [illegible] favourite [illegible] took [illegible] the Duke of [illegible] Tankerville [illegible] Duke of [illegible]

the Steine leaning on the arm of the Duke, who was a great friend both of the Prince and of Mrs. Fitzherbert.

The Prince indulged in healthy pleasures. Cricket was one of his favourite pastimes this year, and many were the matches played in the Pavilion Gardens. Every morning, weather permitting, the Prince bathed in the sea, and his swimming was superintended by an amphibious old sailor called Smoker. The following anecdote of Smoker has come down to us:—A boisterous night was succeeded by a very rough sea, and the waves broke upon the beach with great violence. The Prince notwithstanding repaired to his usual bathing-place, where Smoker was waiting to receive him. "I shall bathe this morning, Smoker." "No, no, your Royal Highness," replied Smoker, "it is too dangerous." "But I will," said the Prince, and was proceeding towards the machine, when the doughty Smoker stepped in front of him, and putting himself in a boxing attitude (for the fellow could box as well as he could swim), expostulated with the Prince as follows: "Come, come, this won't do. I'll be damned if you shall bathe. What do you think your royal father would think of me if you were drowned? He would say, 'This is all owing to you, Smoker. If you had taken proper care of him, poor George would still be alive.'"[1] The Prince good-naturedly desisted. He often related the anecdote to his friends.

Smoker had his counterpart in Martha Gunn, the

[1] "Brighton in the Olden Time (*pamphlet*), By an Inhabitant thereof."



MARTHA GUNN
THE BRIGHTON BATHING WOMAN



WELTJE
THE PRINCE'S COOK AND [illegible]

celebrated bathing-woman of Brighton, who superintended the marine ablutions of many beautiful ladies, among others of Mrs. Fitzherbert, whom she always addressed as "Mrs. Prince." Martha Gunn was in high favour with the Prince, who often joked with her on the subject of her calling with more wit than delicacy. Martha was what was known as a "ticket holder," and she had the traditional right of entry to the royal kitchen at the Pavilion, where she was always well treated. The following story is told of one of her visits: "When in the kitchen one afternoon Martha was presented with a pound of butter. The Prince at that moment was seen entering the kitchen, and Martha, whispering to the servants, quickly deposited the butter in her pocket. This little bit of legerdemain was, doubtless, observed by the Prince; and, being ripe for a joke, he speedily entered into conversation with Martha, getting the 'butter side' of her, and edging her nearer and nearer to the great kitchen fire. It was a sad dilemma. The Prince kept talking, and the butter kept melting! But the venerable dame—whose rueful countenance doubtless betrayed her sensations—was afraid to move. External *evidence* on the floor, however, soon after showed the Prince that his design was accomplished, and he bade the old lady 'good day.' The internal *evidence* he was contented to leave to Martha herself. *What this* was may be imagined, but *deponent sayeth* not."[1]

Despite his love of a practcial joke, *occasionally*

[1] "The Brighton Pavilion and its Royal Associations." By J. G. Bishop.

at his servants' expense, the Prince was adored by all his retainers for his friendliness and kindly interest in their welfare. No master ever had more devoted servants than he.

Of the Prince's kindness to his servants there are many anecdotes. Once at Brighton a stable-boy named Tom Croys had been dismissed by the head groom for stealing oats. Going round his stables one day the Prince noticed the boy was gone, and inquired the cause. When he was told, he was extremely angry that any one in his service should be *dismissed without his knowledge*, and *commanded* that the boy should be sent for. The boy, tears trickling down his face, was brought before his royal master. The Prince reprimanded him, asked if it were a first offence, and then said: "Tom, if you are taken back to my stables again, can I trust you?" The boy promised amendment. Then said the Prince: "Go back and recover your character. Be diligent, be honest, and make me your friend; and, hark 'ee, Tom, I will take care that no one shall ever taunt you with what is passed." The boy went back, and became an honest and trustworthy servant.

Mrs. Fitzherbert received the warmest welcome this year at Brighton. No one believed Fox's denial of her marriage, and every one was anxious, by increased respect, to make amends for the wrong done her. The public repudiation "in the House of Commons," wrote an old Brighton *habitué* in after years, "did not appear to have any more effect upon the Brighton community than it produced on herself. High authorities in the fashionable world—con-

fidential friends of the lady—mysteriously intimated a knowledge that the denial was a sham, and as the heir-apparent still continued to be accessible by paying attention to her, the excitement respecting Mrs. Fitzherbert and the Prince remained unabated. . . I can recall her to mind at this time," continues the writer, "radiant in her brilliant loveliness—her delicate features, her pure complexion, her exquisite brown eyes, her serene expression, combining to produce a face that impressed every spectator with a delightful sense of amiability and tenderness; while her figure, set off to the best advantage by the costume of the time, was always distinguishable from those of the aristocratic beauties by whom she was generally surrounded, by its singular dignity and grace. Though nobody ventured to call her 'Princess,' every one of her innumerable admirers of both sexes enthroned her as a queen. She was recognised as the 'Queen of Hearts' throughout the length and breadth of fast-increasing Brighton, and a more loyal people it was impossible for a Sovereign to have. They honoured her, they almost worshipped her. Proud was the aspirant of Fashion who succeeded in obtaining her notice in public; honoured the devotee of gentility who could boast the least *acquaintance with her in private*. To be invited to meet her at the palatial Pavilion was acknowledged to be a covetable distinction, but to be welcomed by her to her modest house was regarded as a precious privilege. She *never* had an enemy, and was constantly increasing her circle of friends."

The late Mr. Shergold of Brighton, who died

within the memory of many, has also given an enthusiastic account of Mrs. Fitzherbert as she appeared about this period.

"I have seen Mrs. Fitzherbert," he writes, "many a time and oft. Once I had the pleasure to see that beautiful creature in a way that made a deep impression on me. I was going from Castle Square towards the Steine, and had just arrived at the corner of the Castle Tavern, and was turning, when Mrs. Fitzherbert, accompanied by her brother, Mr. Smythe, appeared. I was then about eighteen, a very susceptible age, when a man feels the beauty of woman, the beauty of art, the beauty of poetry, the beauty of everything really beautiful, if ever he feels it at all. The lady was walking—the day was splendid, the sun was at its meridian—there was not a cloud. All this I remember well, and I remember well also, that at the moment the most beautiful object in the world seemed to be Mrs. Fitzherbert. Had I seen the lady sitting or standing I should doubtless have thought her beautiful; but her fine and graceful person was in motion—her countenance, at all times singularly expressive, was unusually animated by the fineness of the weather, and, as she came suddenly upon me, with all her personal attractions heightened by the same adventitious setting-off, I saw her more than usually beautiful. . . . She was a woman who needed nothing but a diadem to make her a queen."

Mrs. Fitzherbert was in fact the recognised queen of the fashionable society in Brighton. All who went there paid her court. This was so well understood that the Duke of Rutland, who was Lord-

Lieutenant of Ireland, wrote from Dublin to his Duchess[1] not to go to Brighton, as in that event the Prince of Wales would ask her to visit Mrs. Fitzherbert, "which I would have you avoid, but I hear it is indispensable with him, so you had better be silent on that head until he asks you—if he should do so at all—and then I think your state of health will be a good excuse."[2] And again: "If you go to bathe in the sea, do not go to Brighthelmstone, because you will be under a difficulty about Mrs. Fitzherbert."

But the Duchess did not heed her lord. She was a stately beauty of the type of a Grecian goddess, haughty and very self-willed. We find her in July at Brighton, and the Duke still writing (July 29), "I hope you will not find embarrassment about Mrs. Fitzherbert." So far from suffering any "embarrassment," we find the Duchess joining the Prince's select party at the Lewes races, a party which included Mrs. Fitzherbert, the Duke and Duchess of Cumberland, and the Princesse de Lamballe, "who was particularly distinguished through the day by the *enviable* attentions of the Duke of Queensberry,"[3] Lord and Lady Abergavenny, the Countess of Talbot, Lord Clermont, &c.

One night early in August, when the Prince was *supping at the Pavilion*, seated between the Princesse de Lamballe and Mrs. Fitzherbert, the news

[1] Mary Isabella, daughter of the fourth Duke of Beaufort, *m.* 1775, Charles, fourth Duke of Rutland, K.G., Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, who died at Dublin later in the same year, 1787. The Duke's objections, it may be noted, were official rather than personal, the Duchess being the wife of the Viceroy.

[2] Rutland MSS., *op. cit.*

[3] *The Morning Herald*, August 6, 1787.

came to him that his brother Frederick, Duke of York, had come back to England from the Continent after a banishment of seven years. The Prince at once posted off to Windsor to welcome his brother. The Duke had been sent into exile shortly before his elder brother came of age, because, in the King's opinion, the brothers acted and reacted badly on one another. The experiment had not succeeded in the case of the Duke of York, for he achieved at Osnabrück, Hanover, and Paris, a reputation for wildness, so great as to astonish even Mirabeau. His reputation was probably exaggerated—it was certainly belied by his appearance. There is a picture of him by Sir Joshua Reynolds at this time which depicts him as a tall, slim youth, with a slight stoop, delicate features, and a refined, sensitive mouth. There is nothing in the picture of the grossness which makes itself apparent in the better-known portraits of the Duke in later life.

The Duke of York, despite his failings, which were those of most young princes of his age, had many fine qualities. Like the rest of George III.'s sons, he was handsome, high-spirited, and good-hearted. His manners lacked the grace and courtesy of those of the Prince of Wales. He was brusque, boisterous, and broad in conversation, but he was more truthful than his elder brother, more straightforward, more sincere, and he never forsook a friend. He made many mistakes in later life, but his friends loved him, and one said of him that "he always had the instincts of an English gentleman." He was the favourite son of George III., who was never tired of contrasting him favourably with the Prince of

Wales One wonders, if he were so fond of him, why he ever sent him away The description of his home coming is Arcadian in its display of family affection; the happy father embraced his long absent son, the Queen and her daughters joined in the raptures The Prince of Wales had posted all through the night from Brighton, and when he reached Windsor the meeting between the brothers, we are told, was "most affecting" After regarding one another for a moment in silence they embraced, and the Prince was moved to tears Separation had only strengthened their fraternal affection, and it was soon apparent that if the Duke of York had to choose between his father and his elder brother he would throw in his lot unhesitatingly with the latter

As soon as the family gathering at Windsor broke up the Prince took his long lost brother to Brighton and introduced him to Mrs Fitzherbert. Thus began a friendship which lasted through life, the Duke formed a high idea of Mrs. Fitzherbert's character and judgment He must early have known that some form of marriage had taken place between her and his brother, and a less honourable man might have turned the knowledge to his advantage. The Duke was as Fox reminded the Prince of Wales in his memorable letter, the King's favourite son, and the next after him in succession to the throne. It was a disputed legal point whether the Royal Marriage Act abrogated the clause in the Act of Settlement which made the Prince who contracted a marriage with a Roman Catholic ineligible for the succession, but whether it did, or did not,

the Duke of York, stout Protestant though he wa never raised the question. He was the last man the world to betray a confidence, or to push forwa his own interests at the expense of those of h brother. He had a sincere regard and affection f Mrs. Fitzherbert also, and would never willingly c anything to cause her pain. He invariably treate her with that deference and respect which a ma however dissolute he may be, shows, if he is gentleman, to a good woman. Later, the Duke York rendered Mrs. Fitzherbert material servic by becoming a medium of communication betwee her and his parents. But that was not yet, fc the King and Queen still regarded her coldly, an were anxious that all connection between her an the Prince should be broken off.

There were great rejoicings at Brighton durin the summer that followed the Duke's return. Th Prince celebrated his birthday at the Pavilion by sumptuous entertainment, and in the evening th town was illuminated. But the gaiety never de generated into license, and Mrs. Fitzherbert's goo influence continued as strong as ever. This im provement was noted with great candour by the press. "The Prince of Wales gains many hearts by his affability and good-humour. His company is much better than it used to be, and he is certainly more sober in his libations to Bacchus. Mrs. Fitz-herbert looks more elegant than ever. One could indeed hardly help exclaiming with the army of Mahomet II., when he showed them his Irene, 'Such a woman is worth a kingdom.'"[1]

[1] *Morning Post*, August 9, 1787



FREDERICK, DUKE OF YORK, AND BISHOP OF OSNABRÜCK

Though Mrs. Fitzherbert was much attached to the Duke of York, it may be feared that his return after a while rather added to her trials than helped her. The royal brothers, in their joy at being re-united, when they got to London, plunged once more into riotous gaiety. Mrs. Fitzherbert suffered much in consequence, not only on the Prince's account but her own, for her natural refinement recoiled from these scenes of revelry. She was also subject at this time to annoyance from the fanaticism of the half-crazed Lord George Gordon, who had fomented the Gordon riots in 1780, which had been indirectly responsible for the death of Mrs. Fitzherbert's second husband. He now again tormented her because of her reported marriage to the Prince of Wales. He was at this time being prosecuted for a libel he had circulated concerning the Queen of France. He dragged into his defence, with a view of inflaming popular passion, the Prince of Wales's "Papistical wife," of whom he spoke with great freedom, and said that he desired her to attend the court and give evidence. When he was asked for what reason he wished Mrs. Fitzherbert to appear in court, he replied that he had had a conversation with her in Paris a few years ago concerning some intrigue between the French and British Courts, and he wished to substantiate what he had said. Of course Mrs. Fitzherbert refused to appear, but nothing daunted, Lord George called at her house in London and tried to serve a *subpœna* on her. He was turned out of doors by her servants, and he was also threatened with chastisement by her brother if he molested her

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further. The threat had its effect, for he did not go to her house again. But he wrote the following letter to Mr. Pitt:—

Lord George Gordon to the Right Hon. William Pitt, M.P.

"SIR,—Mr. Walter Smythe, brother to Mrs. Fitzherbert, came to my house in Welbeck Street this morning, accompanied by Mr. Acton, to be present whilst he informed me that he would call me to an account if I went to Mrs. Fitzherbert's house again, or wrote to her, or to him, or took liberties with their names in public, as Mrs. Fitzherbert was very much alarmed when my name was mentioned. I answered, that I looked upon this as a threatening visit; but that I must yet apply to Mrs. Fitzherbert, or himself, or Sir Carnaby Haggerston as often as I found occasion, till a written answer was sent to me concerning the *proper title* of their sister, just as if he had not called upon me. Some other conversation passed respecting the marriage; but this was the substance and result of the whole. I think it my duty to inform you, as Prime Minister, that you may be apprised of, and communicate to the House of Commons, the overbearing disposition of the Papists. I have the honour to be, Sir, your most obedient and humble servant,

"G. GORDON.

"*4 o'clock, Friday, May* 4, 1788."

These were trials undoubtedly, yet Mrs. Fi herbert had her compensations. The Prince -

still devotedly attached to her, and her wishes were his law.

The year which followed (1788-1789), may be regarded as marking the highest point of her influence over the Prince. Her enemy (as she conceived him to be), Charles James Fox, was still abroad, "disgusted," as he said, "with the political situation," and indignant, so his friends said, at the way in which the Prince had used him for his purpose, and then given the lie to what he had stated in the House of Commons. For by every act and word, short of open acknowledgment of his marriage, the Prince seemed desirous of mitigating the force of Fox's declaration. He treated Mrs. Fitzherbert with all the deference which a man shows to his honoured wife. She was everywhere, by his command, treated with respect, which was only second to that shown to Royalty. He showered gifts upon her; had she wished it she might have had jewels worth a king's ransom. With part of the money given him by Parliament, the Prince took for her a mansion in Pall Mall, and decorated and furnished it in a style of magnificence which vied with Carlton House, though it was modified by her taste into a quiet and refined luxury. Here Mrs. Fitzherbert maintained an establishment which was semi-royal. She did not live alone; an elderly lady of good birth and irreproachable character, well known to the royal family, Miss Pigot, stayed in her house, accompanied her in public, and filled the position of companion, or rather of lady-in-waiting. All the wits and politicians, who were known as

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"the Prince's friends," paid her their homage, and all the place-hunters craved her favour with the Prince, recognising that she was all powerful. Yet she never once abused the trust placed in her, never thrust herself forward unduly, never asked for a place or position for a friend, unless that friend were qualified for it on other grounds than her friendship. Through all her prosperity she never lost her head, never presumed on her position, or used her influence for ignoble ends; never forgot a friend, and was always gracious, kindly, and unassuming. At her house in Pall Mall she entertained freely. Mary Frampton, who had known her as Mrs. Weld of Lulworth, describes one of these receptions in her "Journal":—

"When Mrs. Fitzherbert was living in Pall Mall, within a few doors of Carlton House, we were at one of the assemblies she gave, which was altogether the most splendid I was ever at. Attendants in green and gold, besides the usual livery servants, were stationed in the rooms and up the staircase to announce the company and carry about refreshments, &c. The house was most beautifully furnished; one room was hung with pucked blue satin. A whole-length picture of the Prince of Wales, and his bust, and that of the Duke of York, ornamented the dining-room. Her own manners ever remained quiet, civil, and unpretending; and in the days of her greatest influence she was never accused of using it improperly. The Prince and, I think, his brother the Duke of York, came in late to the assembly."[1]

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In November 1789 the Prince and Mrs Fitzherbert were at Brighton, surrounded by their friends, when news reached them of the alarming illness of the King. Throughout the autumn, strange rumours had been current in well informed circles concerning the King, and these gradually filtered down through the clubs and coffee-houses to the general public. At a Levée, held early in November, the King behaved so strangely as to give all present the impression that his mind was disordered. Still his physicians did not interfere, and for nearly a fortnight later, the King was allowed to continue the round of his fatiguing duties without let or hindrance, with the result that he became worse every day. Every effort was made to conceal his condition, but in the King's immediate circle there was a dread of coming disaster. The Prince of Wales was kept in ignorance as long as possible, but at last came a report that the King was really out of his mind. Then he determined to see how matters stood for himself, and posted from Brighton to Windsor, where the Duke of York already was. He found the King's state to be worse than he anticipated. The unhappy monarch perpetually paced up and down, pouring out a stream of incoherent talk, until he rendered himself almost unintelligible from hoarseness. Still he was under no restraint. The arrival of the Prince at Windsor brought matters to a climax. In the evening, during dinner, the King suddenly, and without provocation, flew at his eldest son, seized him by the collar, and pushed him against the wall, violently demanding if he dared to

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Mrs. Fitzherbert, who had been left at Brighton, hastened up to London on receipt of the news from Windsor, so as to be in more direct communication with the Prince. The King's dangerous illness affected her only one degree less acutely than it affected the heir-apparent himself. The Prince had always promised her full reparation when it should be in his power, and now that his succession to the throne seemed imminent, the power would soon be in his hands. Whatever form that reparation took, it could not fail to influence profoundly her future life. Mrs. Fitzherbert was not an ambitious woman, nor was she one who sought her own interest, except where her good name was concerned. She did not care for wealth or power, and, though the prospect which now opened before her eyes might have dazzled any woman, she kept her head.

Mrs. Fitzherbert went to her house in Pall Mall, and was soon in communication with the Prince's friends. She brought with her from Brighton Sheridan and his wife, and they stayed with her for a time, "having," writes a contemporary, "no other habitation." The near prospect of place and emolument intoxicated the impecunious Sheridan. He acted as the Prince's confidential agent in London; while at Windsor the Prince had with him one of his equerries, Admiral Payne, familiarly known as "Jack Payne," who sent daily bulletins of the progress of the King's illness to the Prince's friends in London. This illness went from bad to worse, until it seemed that the King's death was only a question of hours. "The last stroke," wrote Payne

to Loughborough with ill-disguised eagerness, "as I hear, from the *best* authority, cannot be far off. It is what everybody, in a situation to see, is obliged to wish as *the happiest possible termination to the melancholy scene.* The event we looked for last night is *postponed* perhaps for a short time." Yet even as Payne was writing, his confident anticipations were being falsified. The King, who was thought to be almost at his last gasp, fell into a profound sleep, from which he awoke much better. The crisis was passed. The next day the doctors pronounced him to be out of immediate danger, so far as his bodily health was concerned; but his mental affliction remained as bad, or worse, than before, and the physicians confessed that they considered it to be permanent.

The King's rally was a blow to the Prince and his friends. *He* decently masked his disappointment, but they did not conceal theirs. The new situation demanded a complete revision of plans, for a Regency and not a sovereignty was now the end in view. A council of the Prince's friends was hurriedly called at Bagshot. Thither came secretly the Prince and Payne from Windsor, and Sheridan and Mrs. Fitzherbert drove down from London. Lord Loughborough had been invited, but now that the King was better he was too cautious to come, and in a long despatch he advised the Prince to adopt "not dissimulation, but a certain reserve and guard upon the frankness of that amiable disposition, which is the ornament and delight of society." What took place at the meeting is not known, but no communication at that time seems to have been

made by the Prince to the official heads of the Whig party. Sheridan had in fact, by his eagerness for place, and his anxiety to display his own importance and show his possession of the Prince's confidence, given offence to the Duke of Portland and other influential Whigs. But one important development followed on the Bagshot council. The Prince determined to consult Fox as to what should be done. The news could not have been welcome to Mrs. Fitzherbert, yet she must have seen that he was the only man to save the situation. To the Prince at such a crisis he was indispensable.

Fox was abroad, but a messenger had been sent to him on the sixth day after the King's outburst at Windsor, and since then courier after courier had been despatched to him in furious haste. Fox had been abroad for many months, and had planned for himself an Italian tour, in company with Mrs. Armitstead. Disgusted with affairs in England, he had purposely left no address. He received no letters and he read no newspapers. The first messenger despatched from Windsor traced Fox to Geneva, but lost track of him there. After many false scents he finally ran him to earth at Bologna.

Fox appreciated the gravity of the situation, and lost not a moment in obeying the Prince's summons. Turning his back on Italy and its delights, he started at once homeward. At Lyons he found another courier, with a letter telling him of the King's total loss of reason. He pressed on with all speed, leaving his own chariot for the ordinary post carriage so as to gain time, and finally reached

London on November 24, having been nine days on the journey, a surprising feat considering the conditions of the roads, and the means of travel in those days. But the great exertion and the fatigues of the journey had told heavily on his health, and it was some time before he recovered from it.

Fox arrived in London just in time. Parliament, convened for November 20 (1788), had been prorogued until December 4, and this gave breathing time. Fox at once impressed upon the Prince the necessity of a reconciliation with the Duke of Portland, who had refused to help in the matter of the Prince's debts. The Prince behaved very handsomely. "Pray shake the Duke of Portland by the hand for me," he said, "and tell him that I hope everything that is past may be forgot between us." With the exception of the hasty visit to Bagshot, and an occasional escape to Carlton House, the Prince had all this time been detained at Windsor, where he fretted at the confinement. Meanwhile Pitt and the other Ministers had been down to Windsor, and had seen the King, but the Prince refused to see them. Soon after the Ministers' visit the King was removed to Kew, and placed by Pitt under the care of an ex-clergyman named Willis, who was a specialist in lunacy, and with his son had made some remarkable cures.

On the eve of the opening of Parliament, December 4, a Cabinet Council was held at Pitt's house, and as soon as it rose, a messenger was despatched to Kew with a letter for the Queen. Its purport

was soon known to the Prince of Wales, and confirmed his suspicions that Pitt and the Queen were in league against him. The Queen wrote to her eldest son a letter to sound him, saying that she had been asked to take a share in the Regency, but *that she thought it better to take* no part in politics, but devote herself solely to the King in his sad condition. The Prince warily replied, that "her Majesty might assure herself that she should be considered as his Majesty's sole guardian, so long as the unhappy malady should continue." On the surface nothing could be more proper than these letters, but in the light of subsequent events one may read between the lines, and see in them the beginning of the long and unedifying struggle between mother and son.

Parliament reassembled on December 4, and it at once became apparent that the object of Pitt was to gain time. The report of the physicians was laid before the House. It was very vague, but with one exception (Warren) the doctors inclined to the hope that the King might recover. The House was adjourned, and when it met again Pitt proposed a committee to examine into the precedents. This step was violently opposed by Fox, who declared that as the heir-apparent was of full age and capacity, he had *the right* to exercise the governing power, so long as the King remained in his present state, just as though the King were dead, and the Prince of Wales had ascended the throne. This was a tactical blunder, for it paved the way to endless discussion. Pitt immediately pounced on Fox's use of the word "right," and

declared it to be a treasonable doctrine (it was certainly a most un-Whiggish one). The Prince had a "claim," he admitted, but no more *right* than any other member of the community. On this point followed impassioned debates. Burke denounced Pitt as "one of the Prince's competitors" for the Regency, and Pitt replied in a "damned passion." Outside the wildest canards flew about, and party feeling ran to its highest pitch. There were rumours of a "Council of Regency," over which, said the Whigs, Pitt would preside, "reigning as King William IV."

After a few days Pitt affected to make a concession. He admitted that the Prince was the most suitable person to be vested with the Regency, subject to certain restrictions. These restrictions, even before they were formulated, were denounced by Fox as an attempt to make the Prince refuse the Regency altogether, by imposing humiliating conditions. Pitt retorted that as the question of "right" had been revived it was necessary to inquire thoroughly into the matter; he appointed a committee, and thus gained another two weeks' delay. As the great Minister knew, time was all important. Willis, his nominee at Kew, had reported privately to him that the King's condition was more favourable, and that there was a prospect that he would before long recover his reason. The Prince, not wishing to be out-generalled, and seeing that the theory of his "right" was being used to play into his enemies' hands, threw over Fox, and despatched the Duke of York to the House of Lords to disclaim it. The Duke did so in an able speech, and he was

supported by his uncle, the Duke of Gloucester; but these manœuvres had no effect, for Pitt had already made up his mind on the course to pursue. On December 16 he introduced three resolutions on the subject of the Regency. In the fierce debates that followed, another three weeks of precious time were lost. In the end Pitt's resolutions were carried, and the Ministers set about preparing a Bill. It was understood that the Prince was to be offered the Regency, but with such restrictions as Pitt should be pleased to impose.

The dissensions in the royal family now rivalled those in Parliament. The Queen was wholly on Pitt's side, and ranged herself in active opposition to the Prince of Wales, who was supported by his uncles and brothers. It was intimated that the Queen had reconsidered her decision, and was prepared to accept the Regency with Pitt's conditions, if the Prince of Wales refused to accept them. The Prince was hardly allowed to see his father by the Queen, and a bitter dispute arose about the custody of the King's papers and jewels. "She is playing the devil," wrote Sir Gilbert Elliot to his wife, "and has all this time been at the bottom of the cabals and intrigues against the Prince." The Princes resented their mother's attitude. The Prince said, "In this matter her Majesty showed a degree of passion which I have never witnessed or believed to exist in her Majesty before;" while the Duke of York said to her, "I believe, Madam, you are as much deranged as the King." Their attitude was reflected by their friends, who spoke of the Queen with disrespect. For instance, we hear

of a supper-party at Mrs Robert Walpole's, at which were present the Prince of Wales, the Duke of York, Mrs Fitzherbert, Jack Payne, and others, including oddly enough the Duchess of Gordon, who was an ardent Pittite Payne, who was in high favour with the Prince, made (no doubt, in his cups) some ribald allusion to the friendship between Pitt and the Queen, at which the Prince laughed boisterously; but the Duchess exclaimed, "You little, insignificant, good-for-nothing upstart, you pert, chattering puppy, how *dare* you name your royal master's royal mother in that style!"[1]

Behind all the disputes about the Regency, never mentioned in official documents or speeches, but lurking in all men's minds, was the question of the Prince's secret marriage to Mrs Fitzherbert. Fox's denial was now generally discredited, and the country felt itself deceived The old hatred of Popery existed in the provinces, and it was partly the fear of the Prince's "Papist wife," who had so great an ascendency over him, that inspired the great towns and country districts to pour addresses in upon Pitt at this juncture, assuring him of their support. These proofs of the feeling in the country encouraged the Prime Minister to hamper the Prince's power by every possible restriction, and not to make the slightest concession. The nation was at Pitt's back, and was profoundly convinced that the Prince was not fit to exercise the royal power except under stringent restrictions. What those restrictions were soon became apparent. Early in the New Year,

[1] "Lady Harcourt's Diary." Locker MSS. in Massey's "History of England."

1789, the Prince was offered the Regency, but was shorn of most of the privileges of sovereignt The care of the King's person, with the manageme of the Royal Household, and the appointment all officers and servants therein, were given to th Queen. The Prince, as Regent, was to have n power to touch the property of the King—that i Crown property; no power to grant offices or pen sions connected therewith, and no power to creat peers. Well might the Prince write that these wer "restrictions such as no dictator could ever hav been barefaced enough to bring forward." But h did not refuse the Regency, even with these humili- ating conditions, for he knew that the Queen would take the office if he did not. When therefore the deputation of both Houses of Parliament waited on him at Carlton House, he said he would accept the Regency,[1] "confident that the limitations on the exercise of the royal authority deemed necessary for the present have been approved only by the two Houses as a temporary measure."

Then the Regency Bill was introduced into the House of Commons, and the fierce quarrels began all over again. It fell to Burke to lead the Oppo- sition, which he did in a series of impassioned speeches, declaring that the Bill was "not only de- grading to the Prince but to the whole House of Brunswick." Fox was absent from these debates on the plea of ill health. There was another reason also. Though Fox was outwardly reconciled to the Prince, the old confidence between them was gone. Fox ascribed this to Mrs. Fitzherbert's influence, and resented it. The Prince considered

that Fox had made a grave blunder in tactics when he put forward the claim of *right* on his behalf, and had much mismanaged the whole business in Parliament. But he dared not break with him, though it was even whispered that the Prince was willing to make overtures to Pitt. Lord Buckingham, writing in the autumn to William Grenville on the situation, repeats the rumour on good authority that "the Prince was afraid of Fox, and his opinion of Mr. Pitt was very much altered since the negotiation on the subject of his debts, and that he was sure the Prince would in case of any accident send for them both, and endeavour to make his time quiet by employing them jointly, and that this coolness to Fox was much increased by Mrs. Fitzherbert, who never would forgive his public declaration on her subject in the House of Commons, and had taken every opportunity of alienating the Prince's mind from him."[1]

Mrs. Fitzherbert was a factor who could not be ignored in the Prince's secret councils in the matter of the Regency. She took an active part in them, and she won over to her side the Duke of Portland. "The Duke" (of Portland), writes George Selwyn to Lady Carlisle, "now sups every night with his Royal Highness and his brother at Mrs. Fitzherbert's."[2] To these little suppers Fox was not invited. Indeed, he found himself now shut out from the Prince's confidence. If the Prince became Regent, this confidence was absolutely necessary to Fox if he were to form a Government.

[1] Fortescue MSS. Historical MSS. Commission, vol. i.
[2] Carlisle MSS. Historical MSS. Commission, vol. iii.

In this dilemma it is no wonder he sought, by every means in his power, to make his peace with Mrs. Fitzherbert. But she still maintained her hostile attitude. She refused to see him or to speak to him. Sir Philip Francis tells us that she "abhorred Fox, and never would be reconciled to him, notwithstanding many advances and earnest submissions on his part, of which at his request I was more than once a bearer." The quarrel between Mrs. Fitzherbert and Fox was well known, and the most extraordinary rumours flew about concerning the terms he offered her to effect a reconciliation. Lord Harcourt writes to Lady Harcourt:—

"The first news I heard in my morning walk was that Mrs. Fitzherbert is to be created a Duchess. This cannot be true; for how can the Regent make a Peeress, when he is restricted from making any Peers. It appears to me to be an absolute impossibility. Mr. Fox will probably now again come forward on the stage, but he cannot ever be a favourite after what has passed. After resisting every effort that has been made use of to induce him to give up the letter which authorised him to make the famous declaration he made in Parliament two years ago, he says *he has lost it*. This is not very likely, considering what a very important one it was."[1]

[1] "Harcourt Papers." The letter was not lost. It must have been the letter which the Prince of Wales wrote in answer to Fox, December 11, 1785, before his marriage to Mrs. Fitzherbert. It was found among Fox's papers after his death, tied up with his letter to the Prince on the subject. Probably Fox did not think it sufficiently strong to justify his categorical statement in the House of Commons; perhaps he did not care to betray the Prince's confidence.

Again the *Morning Herald* writes, December 15, 1788:—

"A very extraordinary circumstance has recently occurred, which will probably be the means of delaying for some time the final and complete arrangement of the intended *blue and buff* administration (the colours of Fox). The impediment originated with Mr. Fox; and were there not more of popular artifice than principle in it, it would be more honourable to his character than perhaps any part of his conduct that had before attracted public notice.

"The memorable declaration of Mr. Fox, in the House of Commons, on the subject of a marriage between a certain Great Character and a Lady well known in the higher circles, cannot but be fresh in the memory of almost every individual in the Kingdom.

"That connexion, on account of the difference in religious principles, appears to Mr. Fox fraught with probable mischief to his measures; he has, therefore, declared his positive resolution not to take any part in the intended new Ministry, until the exact limits of that connexion are satisfactorily defined, as he has now reason to believe that it is of a more *coercive and permanent* nature than he was once induced to imagine and announce.

"To annul the grounds of Mr. Fox's objection, no less a sum than the annual allowance of £20,000 has been offered to the lady, on condition of her retiring to the Continent. This the lady has positively refused; expressing her firm determination to abide by an authority she is said to hold forth as unanswerable and unalienable.

"A Character (the Duke of York), who has lately started forth into oratorical consequence is the negotiator in this important business, who, finding the lady obstinate, has offered, in addition to the enormous income above mentioned, the rank of an English Duchess!

"The lady, however, firmly resists all these alluring temptations, urging that she was in circumstances entirely independent previously to her being induced to coincide with that condition from which she is resolute not to recede, as character is of much greater importance to her than affluence, however abundant, if attended with] the deprivation of that rank to which *she holds herself entitled.*"

This article in the *Morning Herald*, which created a sensation at the moment, was, no doubt, ill-informed and exaggerated. It probably arose from something that Mrs. Fitzherbert had said about Fox, for she made no attempt to conceal her antipathy, and freely and often expressed it. Fox would have liked to break off the connection between the Prince and Mrs. Fitzherbert altogether, but he recognised that such an attempt at this juncture was foredoomed to failure, and did not attempt it. The statement, therefore, that he offered her £20,000 a year to go into exile in the event of the Prince becoming Regent and he Prime Minister, may be dismissed as absurd. Fox knew her too well to make such an offer, but he recognised the extent of her influence over the Prince, and perhaps he felt that he owed her some reparation for the wrong he had done her, in part, unconsciously; but whether he had believed what he

said in the House of Commons or not, there was no need for him to have used such coarse terms. The statement that he offered her the rank of a duchess in the event of his forming a Government is in part borne out by Lord Stourton, who in his loosely-worded narrative writes, "She went so far with respect to Mr. Fox that when afterwards, during his Administration,[1] he made some overtures to recover her good will, she refused, though the attainment of the rank of Duchess was to be the fruit of their reconciliation. In naming this circumstance to me she observed that she did not wish to be another Duchess of Kendal."

This observation of Mrs. Fitzherbert throws a light on her refusal to be created a duchess then, and also many years later, when a similar offer was made her by William IV. The Duchess of Kendal was the acknowledged mistress of George I., and it was because she was his mistress that she was elevated to the rank of a duchess. There was no question of marriage between them. The German Pastor of the Lutheran Chapel Royal refused her the Sacrament because, in his view, she was living "in open sin." Mrs. Fitzherbert, on the contrary, had been married to the Prince, and her Church regarded her as his wife. She was admitted to the Sacraments of her Church, which would not have been the case had she been his mistress. Her marriage, not merely the legality of it (she never claimed that it was *legal*), but the fact

[1] This must either mean Fox's contemplated Administration in 1789, in the event of the Prince of Wales becoming Regent—which came to nothing—or when he became Foreign Secretary in Lord Grenville's Administration in 1806

in toto, had been denied by Fox with gross comments, she had been publicly shamed, and she held that the stain could not be wiped away short of an equally public apology and recantation. But when Fox (conditionally, of course) offered her, instead, the rank of duchess, she spurned it.

Mrs. Fitzherbert preferred to trust to the Prince, who had sworn to make her all possible amends for the public denial of their marriage the moment he had the power. It looked now, with the Regency almost within his grasp, that the power would come. But distrusting Fox as she did, Mrs. Fitzherbert was profoundly agitated by these rumours in the press and elsewhere. She feared that they masked some secret design against her. She sought the Prince and demanded an explanation. The Prince freely denied all knowledge of them, renewed his vows and entreaties, and succeeded in pacifying her, as he had often done before. But with Fox she would hold no sort of communication; and he, sick in mind and body, smarting under the chagrin and disappointment caused by his own tactical blunder in the House, Mrs. Fitzherbert's rebuff and the Prince's coldness, went down to the country, and on the plea of illness absented himself from the House of Commons during the remaining debates on the Regency Bill. He was ill, undoubtedly, but that was not the only reason of his continued absence. Jealousies were rife among the Prince's friends. Sheridan stood high in the Prince's favour and in that of Mrs. Fitzherbert. "Charles Fox," writes one, "besides ill-health, is plagued to death all day long, dissatisfied with Sheridan's supremacy,



MRS. FITZHERBERT

(*After an unfinished Painting by* SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS, *by permission of* Lady BLANCHE HAYGARTH)

and not choosing to be questioned by Mr. Rolle, who vows he will, in spite of threats and opposition, *approfondir* that matter" [*i.e.*, the marriage of Mrs. Fitzherbert].[1]

The irrepressible Rolle, who had never believed Fox's denial at the time, and who was now convinced by the growing power and influence of Mrs. Fitzherbert, and the confident assertions of her friends, that he had been tricked, was determined to get to the truth. He had announced that he would raise the question again during the debates on the Regency Bill, and he intended to address his questions to Fox himself. This Fox was determined he should not do, and so he stayed away from the House altogether.

The Prince's party were in a great fright at the prospect of his marriage with Mrs. Fitzherbert being raised at such an inconvenient time, and did all in their power to discount it in advance. Lord Harcourt writes to Lady Harcourt:[2] "I find it is a measure of the party to say that the Prince, from his amiable character, retains a *friendship* for Mrs. Fitzherbert; but that she has not the least remaining influence; that he is quite tired of her, and in love elsewhere, therefore the public need have no further alarm on her account." And again: "The report of H.R.H. being tired of Mrs. Fitzherbert gains ground. The old Duchess of Bedford said at a party she had the other day, that she knew he could not stand the unpopularity occasioned by his connection with a Catholic, and that he entreated

[1] "Courts and Cabinets of George III." By the Duke ingham, 1853.
[2] "Harcourt P

her to go to France or anywhere abroad and he would give her £10,000 per annum. She, however, refused, saying she would take her chance in England. . . . I doubt the truth of this story."

These manœuvres were unsuccessful in averting a discussion in Parliament.[1] Rolle's opportunity came on February 7, 1789. The Regency Bill was in Committee, and was being discussed in a full House. Presently the House came to the following clause:—

"Provided also, and be it enacted by the authority aforesaid, that if his said Royal Highness George Augustus Frederick, Prince of Wales, shall not continue to be resident in Great Britain, *or shall at any time marry a Papist;* then, and in every case, all the powers and authorities vested in his said Royal Highness, by virtue of the Act, shall cease and determine."

To this Rolle moved an amendment, to insert after the words *or shall at any time marry a Papist* the following: *or shall at any time be proved to be married, in fact, or in law, to a Papist.*

In introducing his amendment *Mr. Rolle* said: "That he meant nothing personal or disrespectful, nothing injurious or hateful to the feelings of any individual. He spoke from the regard he had to the principles of the Constitution which were the bulwarks of our freedom, and out of veneration for the House of Brunswick, and the wish to secure the Protestant succession in that House, because that succession would secure our liberties. . . . Could he have brought himself to believe that, as the clause stood at

[1] Parliamentary History, vol. xxvii. Debate on the Regency Bill, 1789.

present it was sufficiently strong, he would not have proposed the amendment, or if any person would step forward and confirm the declaration solemnly made by a right honourable gentleman (Mr Fox) in that House two years ago, he should be satisfied That declaration had satisfied him at the time, nor did he mean to impeach its credibility, but as doubts and scruples had nevertheless been still entertained without doors, he wished them to be effectually silenced, and that the question might be set at rest for ever'

Lord Belgrave, who followed, blamed Rolle for casting doubts on Fox's declaration that there was no truth in the report that "an indissoluble union had taken place with a very amiable and respectable Character, whose religious opinions differed from the religious opinions of the Established Church of this country' He contended that there was no occasion to discuss the validity of such a rumour over again

Mr Pitt, on behalf of the Government, said that he could not accept the amendment, as the Uniformity Clause was the same as he had found in former Regency Bills, and he judged it sufficient security He did not wish to advert to anything that had formerly passed in the House

The *Attorney-General* also considered the clause, as it stood, a sufficient legal security it had sufficed for our ancestors The House could not legislate on rumours, and "with regard to the particular rumour in question he knew of nothing that could warrant him to believe it to have any foundation"

For the information of the Committee the clause of the Royal Marriage Act (12 George III) was

read. The Clause provides that, previous to the marriage of the descendants of George II. taking place *lawfully*, His Majesty's (George III.'s) consent to such a marriage must be obtained, and signified under his own sign manual, which consent must have the sanction of the Great Seal, and that all marriages contracted without the royal consent being so formally signified, were declared to be *null and void*, and of no effect whatever.

Mr. Rolle said he had heard it to be the opinion of some of the first lawyers of this country that nothing contained in the Act just referred to altered or affected the clause in the Act of William and Mary which enacted that any heir to the Crown who married a Papist forfeited his right to the Crown.

It was now the turn of "the Prince's friends." *Lord North* said that by perusing the Act which had just been read (the Royal Marriage Act) it would appear that no marriage could be contracted of the kind, respecting which they appeared to have such wonderful apprehensions, and therefore no danger could arise to Church and State in the manner dreaded. . . . The Act was in full force, and so it would remain unless regularly repealed by some subsequent statute. He questioned the motives of Mr. Rolle in agitating this question, which "could answer no wholesome purpose whatsoever."

This brought up *Mr. Pitt*, who severely rebuked Lord North for questioning the motives of his hon. friend Mr. Rolle, and "for the levity with which he treated so serious a subject." At the same time

he repeated that he considered the amendment unnecessary

Lord North would not accept the reprimand, and he declared that "the blame rested on Mr Rolle for advancing the dangerous doctrine of questioning the validity of an Act of Parliament regularly passed under all its forms by the three branches of the legislature

Mr Sheridan also assailed the motives of Mr Rolle in continuing to agitate this question "The hon gentleman says he has his doubts, he does not state why He has had Acts of Parliament consulted *tending darkly to sustain those doubts* What motive *can* he have but to give suspicion wing and disseminate alarm? Who has said anything in favour of those doubts? It is true a pamphlet[1] has been written by an ingenious gentleman (Mr Horne Tooke) the madness and folly of which are apparent on every page, and the whole drift of which betrays the author to be a bad citizen, because when he roundly asserts that he seriously believes the fact he alludes to to have taken place, and then resorts to no means of elucidating it, he insinuates what he ought *not* to have insinuated, without proceeding to establish it by something at least that bore the resemblance of truth'

Mr Grey said that the only merited answer to the hon gentleman (Mr Rolle) was the short answer of the Act of Parliament which had been

[1] The allusion was to Horne Tooke's pamphlet, already quoted "A Letter to a Friend on the Reported Marriage of His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales"

read. Whether the hon. gentleman's motives were good or bad, he should leave others to determine; but he did suspect they were not good, because they tended to involve the country in disunion, alarm, and distrust. He reprobated the rumours alluded to as false, libellous, and calumniatory,[1] tending to create in the minds of the public, at a most critical moment, suspicions equally derogatory to the Prince of Wales and dangerous to the general welfare of the public.

Mr. Dundas[2] (Treasurer of the Navy) said: "When he heard that a recent Act of Parliament was the only reply fit to be given to questions of the deepest importance, he could not admit that a matter of such magnitude should rest on such a point, nor would he agree that the effect of the Act of Settlement was virtually done away by a posterior Act, which did not specifically repeat the clause in a Statute, in which the constitution and the country were so deeply interested, as the Act of William and Mary. As little was he willing to submit that the rumour alluded to was a question rather to be laughed at than argued. So to say was surely paying a bad compliment to the Prince of Wales, and resting his cause on a weak and loose foundation. He was ready to say that he disbelieved the

[1] Grey in private life was a man of high honour, yet he must have known that he was deliberately uttering a falsehood, for by his own statement he was one of those to whom the Prince had admitted the fact of his marriage, when he wished that Fox's denial should be softened in the House of Commons. Grey had refused to do this, and Sheridan had undertaken it; but that does not excuse Grey's conduct on this occasion in deliberately misleading the House of Commons.

[2] Henry Dundas, first Viscount Melville (1742–1811).

rumour for other and he conceived better reasons.[1] He lamented a thousand, and a thousand, times the absence of the right hon. gentleman (Mr. Fox) who had made that declaration two sessions ago which had decided his (Mr. Dundas's) opinion at the time, and had since continued to preserve it fixed and unmoved; more especially did he regret the *cause* of his absence (illness). He wished for the right hon. gentleman's presence because he entertained so high an opinion of his sincerity that he was confident he would have come down to the House *at the risk of his life* to have stated his sentiments on the motion of the hon. gentleman (Mr. Rolle) if any point had occurred to have induced him to alter the opinion he had entertained, when the subject had been brought under discussion on a former occasion. On that opinion, solemnly delivered as it had been in that House, he perfectly relied, and therefore he was ready to say he did not give the *smallest* credit to the rumour which had been so often referred to in the course of debate. The hon. gentleman on the other side (Mr. Grey) seemed anxious to provoke a discussion on the whole subject; he for one should feel no delicacy in the world, but for a single consideration, and that was because two Persons must necessarily be made the objects of *the discussion. With regard to one of the high* and respectable Personages alluded to (the Prince of Wales) he certainly should feel but little difficulty,

[1] Dundas's speech was really an elaborate sarcasm: he wished to fix the responsibility for the denial of the marriage on Fox and the Prince's friends, and he knew perfectly well that Fox wished to avoid Rolle

although no man felt more respect for that Exalte Personage than himself; but with regard to th other amiable Character (Mrs. Fitzherbert) h confessed that when the Sex came into questio in that House, he knew not how to agitate a subject of such delicacy. He therefore wished at all times, to shut the door upon such discus sions." Mr. Dundas then rebuked Mr. Grey fo impugning the motives of Mr. Rolle, "and con cluded by hinting to Mr. Grey that it would hav shown more prudence, and have better served th cause on the behalf of which he had exercised hi zeal, if he had restrained that zeal, and taken n part in the debate of the day."

This taunt brought up Grey again, who said "That so far from feeling regret for the manne in which he had delivered his sentiments, he wa happy at having delivered his opinion, since it had drawn from the two right hon. gentlemen (Mr. Pitt and Mr. Dundas) express declarations that they neither of them believed the reports so often alluded to in the course of the debate. He repeated his reprobation of those reports as false, libellous, and calumnious." With reference to the absence of Mr. Fox, he assured the Committee "that it was due to the character of his right hon. friend to declare that no consideration of health, or any other circumstance, would have prevented his attendance in his place if he had not, at the moment, been fully satisfied that what he had asserted on a former occasion was *strictly true.* Had the case been otherwise, his right hon. friend would have been present *even at the risk of his life.*"

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The amendment was then negatived, without a division and the House proceeded to debate the clause which restrained the Prince Regent from creating peers

Thus for the second time was Mrs Fitzherbert's marriage publicly denied in Parliament, and on this occasion by men like Grey and Sheridan, who, if they did not know the full facts of the case, knew for certain that a ceremony of marriage had taken place Well might the unhappy woman exclaim, "Save me from my friends!" She was doubly forsworn

It is unnecessary to follow the debates on the Regency Bill They continued to be marked by the greatest passion and prejudice on both sides. Burke, who led the opposition, excelled himself in invective Fox sulked in retirement The excitement was equally great outside the walls of Parliament The fashionable world of London was divided into two hostile factions The Duchess of Devonshire gave parties on the Whig side, and the Duchess of Gordon on the Tory, the ladies being even more excited than the men. At balls and parties given by the Prince's friends, the ladies appeared wearing "Regency caps," while at the Tory houses the ladies adorned themselves with ribbons inscribed "God save the King" These were wound round their arms or entwined in their hair Mrs Fitzherbert threw herself into the fray *con amore*, and worked early and late for the Prince. Her house was used as a meeting-place for his friends she encouraged the wavering and [illegible] the doubtful Her [illegible]

cartoons. On April 29 appeared one entitled, "The Funeral Procession of Miss Regency." On the coffin rest a Prince's coronet, a dice-box, and an empty purse. Mrs. Fitzherbert acts as Chief Mourner, overcome with grief at the loss of her prospects. Fox and Sheridan follow, and several members of the Prince's household act as mutes, including Weltje, who sings—

> "Vor by Got ve do pine, and in sadness ve tink
> Dat it's long till de Prince vear de Crown."

CHAPTER XIV

FAMILY QUARRELS

(1789—1791)

THE quarrel between Queen Charlotte and the Prince of Wales did not end with the King's recovery; it was prolonged for more than a year. In this family dispute the Queen does not appear in an amiable light. She inflamed the King's mind against the Prince of Wales and the Duke of York, with stories of their misconduct during the struggle for the Regency. She put the worst construction on their actions and motives, and did all in her power to prevent them from having free access to their father. Scenes were frequent between the Queen and her sons. "The Prince of Wales," writes Sir George Elliot soon after the King's recovery, "has had a smart tussle with the Queen, in which they came to strong and open declarations of hostility. He told her that she had connected herself with his enemies, and had entered into plans for destroying and disgracing him and all her children, and that she had countenanced misrepresentations of his conduct to the King and prevented the explanations which he wished to give. She was violent and lost her temper."[1]

A *fête* to celebrate the King's recovery was given

[1] "Sir G Elliot's Life and Letters"

at Windsor, and by the Queen's arrangement it was converted into a party demonstration. All the ladies of the Court wore Garter blue, the Tory colour, and political allusions were frequent in the musical part of the programme; even the sweetmeats at supper were adorned with political mottoes and devices.

The Prince of Wales and his brothers were present, not choosing to be absent, though the Queen had given them a strong hint to keep away. She told the Duke of York beforehand that the party was given only for the "Ministers and those persons in Parliament who have voted for the King and *me*." The King was courteous to his sons, but the Queen was very "sour and glum" because the King spoke to them at all. The Princes seem to have vented their ill-humour on the unoffending Princesses, their sisters, so altogether it cannot have been a pleasant party.

The dispute between the Queen and her sons went from bad to worse, until at last it culminated in a duel fought between the representatives of the contending factions; the Duke of York representing the Prince of Wales's side, and Colonel Lenox figuring as the champion of the Queen and the Court. Lenox's mother held a place in the Queen's household, and he himself was in high favour with Her Majesty. He had gone about everywhere publicly abusing the Prince of Wales and the Duke of York. Of course his remarks were repeated to the royal brothers, and they resented them, for they knew by whom they were inspired. A quarrel was picked on some trifling pretext, and



GEORGE III.



QUEEN CHARLOTTE

Lenox sent a challenge to the Duke of York, who accepted it The duel was fought on Wimbledon Common, Lenox's second was a lord of the King's bedchamber Lenox fired and the ball grazed the Duke's ear, the Duke did not fire, and as he refused to do so the duel came to an ignominious end. The Prince of Wales went down to Windsor after the duel, determined to tell the King the whole affair, but the Queen took care that he should not see him alone The King, who had heard nothing about the duel, was greatly agitated at the danger to which his favourite son had been exposed, but the Queen, who was present all the time, heard the Prince's story unmoved, and her only comment at the end, was to say that it was "all the Duke of York's own fault." When, a few days later, the Duke came to see his father, she made not the slightest allusion to the duel Her sympathies were, of course, with her self constituted champion, a few weeks later she marked this publicly at the King's birthday ball at St James's Colonel Lenox was invited at the Queen's instance, and danced in the same country dance as the royal brothers The Prince of Wales, when he saw him, stopped dancing abruptly, and led his partner out of the dance. The Queen asked the Prince, "Was he tired?" and on his answering in the negative, she supposed "he thought it too hot" The Prince retorted angrily that "in such company it was impossible not to find it too hot" The Queen then, no doubt fearing a scene, gave the signal for retiring, and broke up the ball

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valid. Had he been in his usual health none of these scenes would have happened, but for many months after his so-called recovery, though pronounced to be sane by his physicians, he was weak and feeble, both in mind and body, and did everything under the influence, or the compulsion, of the Queen. The Queen guarded him jealously from any outside interference; she put herself at the head of a faction, and deliberately sought to place the Prince of Wales's conduct in the worst light. Her motive was obvious; she knew, none better, the precarious state of the King's health. It was thought probable that he would have a relapse, and the Queen was determined not to make again the mistake she had made in the last crisis—in not at once securing all the power at her command.

Her conduct was not allowed to pass without protest. The Prince of Wales addressed endless remonstrances to the King, excusing himself, and complaining bitterly of his mother. All these letters the King either ignored, or he replied through the Queen that he "proposed avoiding all discussions that may in their nature agitate him." The victory of the Queen was complete.

All this had the worst possible effect on the Prince of Wales. The disappointment of the Regency had been a heavy blow to him, and followed as it was by the boycott of the court, it drove him into a state, first of anger, and then of indifference. His father would not listen to him, his mother intrigued against him, whatever he did was wrong, and if he did nothing that was wrong also. Every shred of power was jealously kept

from him, every opportunity of public usefulness was denied to him. The position of heir-apparent is always a difficult one; it was never more difficult than in the case of George, Prince of Wales. Nearly every legitimate outlet for his abilities was refused him, and he was driven back upon himself, and forced to dissipate his energies upon a barren round of pleasure. Of a naturally sanguine temperament, this attitude of distrust and hatred on the part of his parents chilled and depressed him. His was a nature which needed appreciation and encouragement.

It has been the fashion to represent the life of the Prince of Wales (afterwards George IV.), from his earliest years until his death, as one long round of self-indulgence and pleasure, with no attempt on his part of reformation, or of striving for higher things; yet of his early manhood, at least, this view is a false and malicious one. For four years, from the period of his marriage to Mrs. Fitzherbert until the disappointment of the Regency, the Prince had honestly striven to render himself worthier of the high position to which he was called. He had retrenched his expenditure, he had striven to pay his debts, he had reformed his manner of living, he drank less, gambled less. He was less wild in his conduct, less free in his conversation, and he had avoided the wildest of his companions. There were occasional lapses, but for four years he made great efforts to reform. That much of this was due to the good influence of Mrs. Fitzherbert, is of course true; much also was [illegible]
his temptations were infinitely

valid. Had he been in his usual health none of these scenes would have happened, but for many months after his so-called recovery, though pronounced to be sane by his physicians, he was weak and feeble, both in mind and body, and did everything under the influence, or the compulsion, of the Queen. The Queen guarded him jealously from any outside interference; she put herself at the head of a faction, and deliberately sought to place the Prince of Wales's conduct in the worst light. Her motive was obvious; she knew, none better, the precarious state of the King's health. It was thought probable that he would have a relapse, and the Queen was determined not to make again the mistake she had made in the last crisis—in not at once securing all the power at her command.

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the Prince's friends he had a strain of ability; he dabbled in literature, and was said to be the author of the ballad, "Kitty of Coleraine." We must also not forget Felix McCarthy, one of Lord Barrymore's gang of "bruisers" who followed him to Brighton. McCarthy was a handsome, impecunious young Irishman of gentle birth, known as the "Irish Giant," a favourite with the Prince, who often helped him, for he was in chronic difficulties about money. To these must be added Mrs. Fitzherbert's brothers, Jack and Watt Smythe, who also had a strain of Irish blood in their veins. They were at this time constant companions of the Prince, and ready to do anything for him. These youths quite lost their heads in the company where they now found themselves. They were wild, and always in want of money, yet it is characteristic of Mrs. Fitzherbert that she consistently refused to use her influence with the Prince to procure any place or sinecure for her brothers. She preferred to help them out of her own pocket, a privilege of which they liberally availed themselves.

Most of these men could plead youth as an excuse for their excesses and extragavances, and their follies were redeemed by many good qualities. This cannot be said of all the Prince's friends, for some of them were wholly vicious. Among these was the Duke of Norfolk, "Jockey of Norfolk," a notorious drunkard and glutton, who often posted over from Arundel to Brighton, and stayed a few days, as the Prince's guest at the Pavilion. Another frequent visitor was the last Duke of Queensberry, familiarly known as "Old Q.," one

this account was dubbed "Newgate." "Neither the Church nor the nobility derived much advantage from his being a member," says one of his contemporaries, and we can well believe it. He too was a combination of the polished gentleman and the perfect blackguard. To this worthy trio of brothers was added a sister (afterwards Lady Melfort), who from the shrewishness of her temper and the violence of her language was nicknamed "Billingsgate." The Barrymores, despite their vices and follies, were the most capital company. They said whatever came into their mind, their wit was always ready, and their spirits never flagged.

The merry recklessness of the Irish temperament had a great attraction for the Prince of Wales, and indeed bore a peculiar affinity to his own character. It must be remembered that he was still a young man, not yet thirty, full of spirits, and the charm of youth. Besides the Barrymores, Sheridan and Burke were Irishmen. So was Colonel George Hanger (afterwards Lord Coleraine), an eccentric character, who for years was the almost inseparable companion of the Prince of Wales. He had entered a Hessian regiment, and served in his corps throughout the war in America. When he came back to London he attached himself to the Prince, who had then just come upon the town, and was given an appointment as equerry. He figured in many of Gillray's cartoons; his eccentricity was marked in his fantastic dress and free manners, and it showed itself in later life, when he became Lord Coleraine, by refusing to acknowledge his title, and considering himself insulted if addressed by it. Like many of

the Prince's friends he had a strain of ability; he dabbled in literature, and was said to be the author of the ballad, "Kitty of Coleraine." We must also not forget Felix McCarthy, one of Lord Barrymore's gang of "bruisers" who followed him to Brighton. McCarthy was a handsome, impecunious young Irishman of gentle birth, known as the "Irish Giant," a favourite with the Prince, who often helped him, for he was in chronic difficulties about money. To these must be added Mrs. Fitzherbert's brothers, Jack and Watt Smythe, who also had a strain of Irish blood in their veins. They were at this time constant companions of the Prince, and ready to do anything for him. These youths quite lost their heads in the company where they now found themselves. They were wild, and always in want of money, yet it is characteristic of Mrs. Fitzherbert that she consistently refused to use her influence with the Prince to procure any place or sinecure for her brothers. She preferred to help them out of her own pocket, a privilege of which they liberally availed themselves.

Most of these men could plead youth as an excuse for their excesses and extravagances, and their follies were redeemed by many good qualities. This cannot be said of all the Prince's friends, for some of them were wholly vicious. Among these was the Duke of Norfolk, "Jockey of Norfolk," a notorious drunkard and glutton, who often posted over from Arundel to Brighton, and stayed a few days, as the Prince's guest at the Pavilion. Another frequent visitor was the last Duke of Queensberry, familiarly known as "Old Q," or

this account was dubbed "Newgate." "Neither the Church nor the nobility derived much advantage from his being a member," says one of his contemporaries, and we can well believe it. He too was a combination of the polished gentleman and the perfect blackguard. To this worthy trio of brothers was added a sister (afterwards Lady Melfort), who from the shrewishness of her temper and the violence of her language was nicknamed "Billingsgate." The Barrymores, despite their vices and follies, were the most capital company. They said whatever came into their mind, their wit was always ready, and their spirits never flagged.

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of the wickedest of wicked old men, who in his youth had been a member of the "Hell Fire Club," and in his old age cared for nothing in heaven or on earth. Of him it was written :—

> "And there, insatiate yet with folly's sport,
> That polished, sin-worn fragment of the Court,
> The shade of Queensb'ry should with Clermont meet
> Ogling and hobbling down St. James's Street."

Another *habitué* was Sir John Lade, the celebrated whip, who had taught the Prince driving, besides many other things that he ought not to have taught him. He was the king of the stables, and the familiar friend of grooms, jockeys, and touts. His wife was the Amazonian Letitia, who created a sensation by riding astride on horseback; she looked like Diana, and she drove a curricle and four with supreme skill, handling the reins even better than her husband. Her origin was of the lowest. Rumours said that she had lived in St. Giles's as the mistress of "Sixteen-String Jack," a highwayman who was hanged in 1774. She then married Sir John Lade, who had a place in Sussex, and thus came to Brighton. The Prince, who loved horses and everything to do with them, found the Lades congenial spirits. We must not forget to mention also the Duke of Orleans, who was often at Brighton during his frequent visits to England. He professed Liberal principles, and was known as Monsieur l'Egalité, but he was really a man of no principles at all; his public morality was on a par with his private conduct. He was a familiar figure on the Steine, and generally appeared

in a bottle-green coat, which contrasted violently with his inflamed and scorbutic countenance.

It was a gay summer at Brighton; the Prince kept his birthday there with great festivities. Oxen were roasted whole, and the town was illuminated. No compliments passed between the King and his son on this occasion, though the court was sojourning at Weymouth for the benefit of the King's health. The Prince of Wales sent the Duke of York to see his father, but he would not go himself, or interrupt for one day his round of pleasure at Brighton. Many families of distinction had come to sojourn there, and lovely ladies of noble birth lent a grace to the Prince's parties. Among them was the witty and fascinating Lady Clare, an Irish lady who was a great friend of Mrs. Fitzherbert, and the stately though gay Mary Isabella, Duchess of Rutland, now a widow, and many more.

The Prince went to Lewes Races this year in semi-state, and was received by the high sheriff of the county, attended by a company of javelin men. Mrs. Fitzherbert, the Duchess of Rutland, and Lady Lade, also drove to the races, each in a separate carriage, and each drawn by four grey ponies. Lady Lade, one would think, was hardly fit company for the other ladies, but the Prince's set was nothing if not "mixed." There were theatrical performances at the Old Theatre in Duke Street, one being given, "by desire of Mrs. Fitzherbert," by amateurs, "for the benefit of those persons who had failed in former attempts." The piece performed was the *Tragedy of the Orphan.* The

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knocked at the doors of peaceable townsmen, frightening women and children Nor were even the Prince and Mrs Fitzherbert exempt from these practical jokes On one occasion, Lord Barrymore s brother, "Cripplegate," rode a horse up the stairs of Mrs Fitzherbert's house—right up to the garrets But the horse could not be persuaded to go downstairs again, and had at last to be pulled down by main force by two blacksmiths Henry Angelo, the fencing master and actor, relates another anecdote —"The year after I played 'Mother Cole at Brighton I received an invitation from Lord Barrymore to his house then upon the Steine One night, when the champagne prevented the evening finishing tranquilly, Lord Barrymore proposed as there was a guitar in the house that I should play on it I was to be the musician and he dressed in the cookmaid s clothes, and so to sing *Ma chère Amie* Accordingly, taking me to another part of the Steine, under Mrs Fitzherbert s window (it was then three o clock), he sang, while I played the accompaniment The next day he told me (quizzing I should think) that the Prince said 'Barrymore you may make yourself a fool as much as you please but if I had known it was Angelo I would have whipped him into the sea'"[1]

In those days Mrs Fitzherbert was merry too, but many of these wild doings were far from her liking In vain would she plead for moderation She found herself powerless to do much The Prince, in the morning when he was in a penitent mood,

[1] Reminiscences of Henry Angelo London 1830

audience was in shouts of laughter throughout the performance, and the Prince, we are told, laughed so much that he "nearly cracked his sides."

Besides races and theatrical parties there were cricket matches in the Pavilion grounds, fencing matches, "pugilistic encounters," dinner parties at the Pavilion every night, and concerts and dances every week. Everything went as merry as a marriage bell, but the harmony was sometimes marred by quarrels among the Prince's friends, which not infrequently ended in a little blood-letting. Hard drinking and high play were responsible for many of these quarrels, and practical jokes for some of them. It was an age of practical jokes; the Prince delighted in them, and the Barrymore family were especially given to pranks of this kind. For instance, a favourite pastime of Lord Barrymore and his brothers was, as they were posting in their coach down the road from London to Brighton, to imitate the screams of a woman, and cry out: "Murder, rape! Unhand me, villain! Let me go!" &c. Chivalrous passers-by would sometimes start in pursuit of the coach and stop it by force, only to find that it contained no fair lady in distress, but instead Lord Barrymore and his muscular "bruisers," who would jump out and administer a sound thrashing to the would-be rescuers. The changing of signposts and the fighting of waggoners on the road were common incidents on these journeys. One summer at Brighton, Lord Barrymore and his brothers after dark went about with a coffin. They called themselves "the Merry Mourners," and

that she would be prosecuted for violating the Royal Marriage Act, and the penalties of *premunire* would be directed against her. She was also threatened with imprisonment for debt, and this threat was nearly being put into force, for the Prince, through his gambling habits, was again heavily embarrassed, and even in sore straits for ready money. Mrs. Fitzherbert shared his difficulties, for she had thrown her jointure into the common stock, and the Prince's allowance to her was irregularly paid. To do him justice the Prince always came to her aid, and raised the money somehow; but latterly, in some unaccountable way, his customary resources in time of need were closed to him. One morning in London, when he was at his wits' end for want of money, a bailiff arrived at Mrs. Fitzherbert's house in Pall Mall and served a writ on her for a debt of £1835. The Prince of Wales was in the house at the time. The debt had not long been owing, but the writ was returnable on the morrow; therefore, if the money were not paid within a few hours, the lady would have to be conveyed to prison. The Prince lost not a moment in applying to his usual money-lenders; not one of them would help him. It was evidently a trap. Mrs. Fitzherbert, whose house was already occupied by the sheriff's officers, sent to a well-known pawnbroker, and tried to raise money on her plate and jewels, but here again there was a difficulty, for the bailiffs refused to let the articles go out of the house. At last the Prince sent for his own jewels from Carlton House, which were duly pledged, and with the money thus raised the debt was paid off,

would promise her anything and everything, but in the evening the same revels would take place, and with the same results. Thomas Raikes writes in his "Journal":—

"Few were the happy hours that she could number even at that period. He [the Prince] was young and impetuous and boisterous in his character, and very much addicted to the pleasures of the table. It was the fashion in those days to drink very hard, and Mrs. Fitzherbert never retired to rest until her royal spouse came home. But I have heard the late Duke of York say, that, often when she heard the Prince and his drunken companions on the staircase, she would seek a refuge from their presence even under the sofa, when the Prince, finding the drawing-room deserted, would draw his sword in joke, and searching about the room would at last draw forth the trembling victim from her place of concealment."[1]

Apart from the Prince's extravagances, Mrs. Fitzherbert had troubles and anxieties of her own. Some of them she had brought upon herself. The way in which she had departed from her usual wise neutrality, and had thrown herself into the struggle for the Regency, had aroused feelings of resentment against her both at court and in the Government. The victorious party determined to make her feel the weight of their displeasure. Nothing was done directly, but endless intrigues were set afoot to separate her from the Prince, and to frighten her into leaving the country. Rumours reached her

[1] "Journal of Thomas Raikes." London, 1857.

that she would be prosecuted for violating the Royal Marriage Act, and the penalties of *præmunire* would be directed against her. She was also threatened with imprisonment for debt, and this threat was nearly being put into force, for the Prince, through his gambling habits, was again heavily embarrassed, and even in sore straits for ready money. Mrs. Fitzherbert shared his difficulties, for she had thrown her jointure into the common stock, and the Prince's allowance to her was irregularly paid. To do him justice the Prince always came to her aid, and raised the money somehow, but latterly, in some unaccountable way, his customary resources in time of need were closed to him. One morning in London, when he was at his wits' end for want of money, a bailiff arrived at Mrs Fitzherbert's house in Pall Mall and served a writ on her for a debt of £1835. The Prince of Wales was in the house at the time. The debt had not long been owing, but the writ was returnable on the morrow, therefore, if the money were not paid within a few hours, the lady would have to be conveyed to prison. The Prince lost not a moment in applying to his usual money-lenders, not one of them would help him. It was evidently a trap. Mrs Fitzherbert, whose house was already occupied by the sheriff's officers, sent to a well-known pawnbroker, and tried to raise money on her plate and jewels, but here again there was a difficulty, for the bailiffs refused to let the articles go out of the house. At last the Prince sent for his own jewels from Carlton House, which were duly pledged, and with the money thus raised the debt was paid off

and Mrs. Fitzherbert was spared further indignity.[1] The jewels were redeemed the following day, for the Prince meanwhile raised some money from a Jew in St. Mary Axe.

Nor was this all. A section of the press was suborned against her, and simultaneously there appeared in many papers articles and paragraphs detrimental to her character, and teeming with abuse, evidently inspired by her enemies. As a rule Mrs. Fitzherbert always ignored these attacks, but one pamphlet in particular was so scurrilous, and so categorical in its statements, that proceedings were taken against the writer for libel, with the result that he was sentenced to pay a fine of £50, a year's imprisonment in Newgate, and to give security for his good behaviour for five years. After this the attacks upon her ceased for a time.

Thus matters went on for two years, 1789–1790; the court and the Prince of Wales being at open war, and much dirty linen was washed on both sides. This public quarrel between the heir-apparent and his royal parents could not be prolonged without causing much scandal, and it threatened to bring the monarchy into disrepute. On all grounds it was to be deprecated. The well-wishers of the royal family therefore strove to bring about a reconciliation, but for a long time without success. Lord Thurlow, who was the trusted friend of both the King and the Prince of Wales, did everything in his power to heal the breach between them. Others were

[1] The incident was not as bad as it sounds, for in those days the presence of bailiffs in the house was no unfrequent occurrence in the mansions of the great, and was often made the subject of a joke by those to whom they paid their unwelcome visits.

working too, notably the Princess Royal[1] and Mrs Fitzherbert, each of whom, from her different stand point, was unwearied in her endeavours to bring about a truce. Mrs Fitzherbert's efforts in this direction were magnanimous, for she had so far received no consideration from the King, while the Queen had shown herself decidedly hostile to her In striving to bring about a reconciliation, therefore, she returned good for evil She was even to some extent working against her own interests, for the King and Queen were anxious to break off her union with the Prince But in the long run Mrs Fitzherbert s unselfishness had its reward Though to the self-centred it might seem that she was ruining her prospects, she was al unconsciously to herself advancing them Her conduct on this as on subsequent occasions, proved to the King and Queen that she was no self-seeker and no intriguer, and gradually their prejudices against her were broken down

The Prince of Wales was formally reconciled to the King in March 1791 The price demanded of him for the paternal forgiveness was that he should no longer identify himself wholly with the Whig party, he was henceforth to receive at his house Tories as well as Whigs Perhaps, since the Regency had faded to a distant dream, it cost him little to make this sacrifice of his political friends The price he hoped to obtain in return for his filial submission was the payment of his debts But this

[1] Charlotte Augusta Matilda, eldest daughter of George III, Princess Royal (1766–1828), afterwards married the King of Wurtemberg

was not much advanced thereby, for the King declared, now as always, that he would not consent to any increase of his son's income, until he married some Protestant princess from a German court—whom he alone considered to be a suitable bride for the Prince of Wales. However, these disputed questions were not raised at the moment, and the Prince's submission to the King was followed by a reconciliation with the Queen. "A gentleman, who lives in the east end of St. James's Park," writes Horace Walpole, "has been sent for by a lady who has a large house in the west end, and they have kissed and made friends, which he notified by toasting her health in a bumper at the Club."[1]

Some rays of the royal favour, albeit tempered by judicious distance, now began to fall upon Mrs. Fitzherbert. Her disinterested efforts to make the Prince submit himself were known to the King and Queen and appreciated by them. They came to admire her character as a woman, to respect the purity of her life, to understand the honesty of her motives, and to admit that her influence over the Prince had never been used for her own advancement. The attitude of the King and Queen towards her seems to have changed about this time from dislike to benevolent reserve. They perhaps feared that any nearer recognition would be construed into an acknowledgment of her peculiar position, a position which, notwithstanding all facts, they consistently refused to accept. Yet all about the Court agreed there was no doubt whatever that the Prince of Wales had been through a form of marriage

[1] "Walpole's Letters," vol. ix.

with Mrs. Fitzherbert, though the details were not fully known. The King and Queen accepted Fox's denial, and treated the story of the marriage as a fabrication, but the princes and princesses and the courtiers discussed it freely. Lady Harcourt,[1] for instance, who was in the Queen's household, and enjoyed her favour and confidence to the fullest extent, writes in the year 1790 (the year when the quarrel between the Queen and her son was raging) of a conversation she had with the Duke of Gloucester of "the marriage between the Prince and Mrs. Fitz." Again she relates the following anecdote on the same subject:—"Pss. Royal told me the P. of Wales had won money of the D. of Bedford at Newmarket, and upon the Course as they were riding about he called out to the Duke, 'You know it don't signify what you owe to me, as your Brother-in-law.' Upon which the Duke of Orleans said, 'Qu'est que c'est que ça que vous lui dites là?' 'Je l'appelle' (said the Prince) 'mon beau-frère.' 'Qu'est que ça veut dire; est-ce que la Fitzherbert a une sœur?' 'Non, non' (said the Prince), 'il est l'amant de ma sœur aînée, il en est folle.'"[2]

By all the royal family, except the King and Queen, Mrs. Fitzherbert was tacitly accorded the position of morganatic wife. The royal dukes, notably the Dukes of York and Clarence, treated her *en belle sœur*, and with two or three of the

[1] Elizabeth, Countess of Harcourt, Lady of the Bedchamber to Queen Charlotte, wife to the Earl of Harcourt, who was Master of the Horse to George III.

[2] "The Harcourt Papers."

princesses she was on terms of friendship. During part of the years 1790 and 1791, Mrs. Fitzherbert resided at her villa at Marble Hill, and here the Prince of Wales and the royal dukes were constant visitors. On the death of Lord North, the Duke of Clarence had bought Bushey Park, not far from Mrs. Fitzherbert, and he was living there with the beautiful and accomplished actress, Mrs. Jordan, the mother of his many children. In the summer of 1791 the Countess of Albany, the widow of Prince Charles Edward Stuart, visited England.[1] The Prince of Wales gave a dinner in her honour, and, as a matter of course, he introduced her to Mrs. Fitzherbert, whom she afterwards visited at Richmond. The meeting between these two distinguished women must have been interesting, for though very different in circumstances and in breeding they had one link in common. Both of them were excluded from their rights because they were Roman Catholics.

This summer also, Mrs. Fitzherbert attended the grand masked *fête* given by Mrs. Hobart at her beautiful villa near Fulham, which was one of the events of the season. Mrs. Hobart (afterwards Countess of Berkshire) was a great friend of the Prince of Wales, and, like many other women of fashion at that day, presided at a faro bank or gambling table. We quote the following account of her *fête*, as it affords a curious illustration of the manners of the time:—

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[1] Louisa, Countess of Albany (1753–1824), by birth a Princess of Stolberg-Gedern. Married in 1772 Prince Charles Edward, and separated from him in 1780. He died in 1788.

"*The Hon Mrs Hobart's Rural Breakfast and Promenade, June* 28

"This long looked-for, and long prevented *déjeuner* was given yesterday in spite of the weather It is almost needless to remark that all the first nobility and fashion about town graced this most delightful *fête* The Prince of Wales came first, and precisely at one o clock About four or five hundred persons were present amongst them was the Duke of Gloucester, the Duchesses of Rutland and Gordon, the Margravine of Anspach, *Mrs Fitzherbert*, the Duke of Queensberry, several of the *corps diplomatique* and many other foreigners of the very first distinction The Duke of Clarence was expected, but did not attend The breakfast lasted from two till past seven o'clock

"The leading person in this entertainment (which was obliged to be confined to the house on account of the weather) was Mrs Bristow, a near relative of Mrs Hobart This lady, who had long resided at the Indian Court of Lucknow, was every inch a queen Draped in all the magnificence of Eastern grandeur, Mrs Bristow represented the Queen of Nourjahad as the "Light of the World in the Garden of Roses She was seated in the larger drawing-room, which was very beautifully fitted up with cushions in the Indian style smoking her hookah, amidst all sorts of the choicest perfumes Mrs Bristow was very profuse with otto of roses, drops of which were thrown about the ladies' dresses The whole house was scented with the most delicious fragrance "[1]

[1] *The European Magazine* July 1791

CHAPTER XV

SUNSHINE AND SHADOW

(1791—1794)

THIS year, 1791, the Duke of York's affairs came to a crisis. His carelessness about money matters, and his betting and gambling habits, had involved him in hopeless embarrassment. Cash and credit were alike exhausted, and his grievance against the King, namely that he had appropriated all the revenues of the see of Osnabrück during the Duke's minority, was past remedy, for the King refused to disburse. Nevertheless it was to his father that the Duke went in his trouble. He was the favourite son, and the King was willing to help him on one condition, namely that he should marry a German princess of the Protestant faith. This condition the King pressed on all his sons, precedent to his granting any pecuniary relief—an odious one, it must be admitted, and one that proved in some cases unfortunate in its results. Yet in the case of the Duke of York the King no doubt honestly believed that a suitable marriage would be his salvation. He was also, since the Prince of Wales refused to be separated from Mrs. Fitzherbert, and several of his other sons had entered into irregular relations, anxious to secure the succession to the throne in as nearly the direct line as possible. The King had

a bride ready for his favourite son, the Princess Royal of Prussia, Frederica Charlotte Ulrica, eldest daughter of Frederick William II. The Duke offered no objection. He was heart-whole, he had met the Princess when he was abroad, and did not dislike her. The alliance was therefore arranged without delay. The Prince of Wales was, of course, consulted in the matter by his devoted brother; he expressed himself well pleased, and raised no difficulties about the marriage treaty, but, says Sir Gilbert Elliot, "He has put in a saving clause for himself in case he chooses to marry, which he thinks probable, if he sees his brother happy with his wife, and told the King that, had he permitted him to go abroad at the time he asked leave to do so (in 1784), he meant to have looked out for a princess who would have suited him, as he was too domestic to bear the thoughts of marrying a woman he did not like."[1] This reads curiously when we remember the Prince's passionate declaration at that very time to Lord Malmesbury, "I will never marry!" But no doubt he deceived himself into thinking that he spoke the truth now as he spoke it then; such was his marvellous power of self-deception, that whatever he wished became to him right and true, simply because he wished it.

The Duke and Duchess of York were married in Berlin on September 29, 1791. They had a tiresome journey to England, owing to the revolutionary spirit then prevailing in France, and at Lisle they were surrounded by a savage mob, and only escaped by obliterating the signs of royalty from

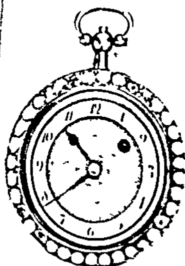
[1] "Life and Letters of Sir G. Elliot."

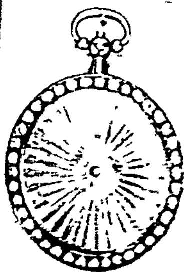
their coach and equipage. They arrived in London in the middle of November, and were received with great ceremony by the King and Queen. On November 23, on account of some legal quibble, they were re-married according to the rites of the Church of England. The Prince of Wales gave the bride away.

As there seemed a probability that one day the new Duchess of York might become Queen-Consort, her appearance and manner was much discussed. She has been described as "a very short woman, with a plain face, a neat little figure, and a remarkably small foot;" but despite her small stature the Duchess had a great sense of what was due to her rank and dignity. She was of a strong character, decidedly eccentric, haughty and reserved to strangers, but to her intimates the kindest woman in the world.

Great curiosity was evinced in London society as to how the Duchess would conduct herself towards Mrs. Fitzherbert, not only because of the latter's relation to the Prince, but because of the cordial friendship which was known to exist between her and the Duke of York. Their first meeting, which took place at a ball at the Duchess of Cumberland's, is thus described: "The Duchess looked much better than that first day at court. People in general were not presented to her, but several were by the Prince, Duke of York, &c., and the Duchess of Cumberland presented Mrs. Fitz. Both ladies squeezed their fans, and talked for a few minutes, and that was all, so this was the *first* meeting."[1]

[1] Letter of Miss Dee to Lady Harcourt: "Harcourt Papers."





WATCH GIVEN TO MRS. [illegible]
BY THE PRIN[illegible]
[illegible] Enamel [illegible]
(By permission of [illegible])

There were plenty to offer advice as to how the Duchess should conduct herself towards Mrs. Fitzherbert, but she declined to be influenced either by the court on one side, or the Prince of Wales or the Duke on the other. Brought up in the strict etiquette of the Prussian court, she had her own views about wives morganatic. She received Mrs. Fitzherbert without difficulty—that much was due to her character and position; but she treated her with distant civility *de haut en bas,* and would not recognise in any way the link between them. Mrs. Fitzherbert resented this attitude, and the Prince of Wales resented it also. The Duke of York could not force his Duchess to treat Mrs. Fitzherbert with more cordiality, for the Duchess had a will of her own, but the Prince of Wales apparently thought that the Duke could do so if he wished, and a coolness sprang up between the brothers in consequence. Lord Malmesbury, writing in 1792, says that Colonel St. Leger told him, "She [Mrs. Fitzherbert] dislikes the Duchess of York, because the Duchess will not treat her *en belle sœur.* It is that which is the cause of the coolness between the brothers." Apparently the dislike which the two ladies entertained for each other was ineradicable, for fourteen years later Lord Malmesbury writes in his diary: "May 25, 1803. The Duke of York came to me at five, uneasy lest the Duchess should be forced to sup at the same table as Mrs. Fitzherbert at the ball to be given by the Knights of the Bath, on the 1st of June. He talks it over with me . . . says the King and Queen will not hear of it. On the other side he wishes to keep on terms with

the Prince. I say I will see Lord Henley, who manages the *fête*, and try to manage it so that there shall be two distinct tables, one for the Prince, to which he is to invite, and another for the Duke and Duchess of York, to which she is to invite her company." Thus the delicate matter was arranged; each lady had a table to herself. The curious part of this family quarrel is that, though a coolness sprang up between the royal brothers, it did not interrupt the warm friendship existing between the Duke of York and Mrs. Fitzherbert, though she was the cause of the coolness. In public the Duke of York felt bound to support the Duchess, whose claim was certainly based on court etiquette, but in private he allowed himself to be governed by his own feelings. His marriage was not a happy one. The Duke was not a model husband, and the Duchess was ill-tempered. Their marriage was unblessed with children, and before long they were to all intents and purposes separated. But they resided under the same roof, for the Duchess was not a woman given to make a scandal.

This year was marked by a further measure of relief to Roman Catholics. By this Act (1791) a number of obnoxious penal laws (some of them obsolete) were repealed; a Roman Catholic could no longer be prosecuted for not attending his parish (Anglican) church, nor for being a Papist, nor for hearing or saying Mass, nor for belonging to any ecclesiastical order of the Church of Rome, nor for performing or taking any part in any form of worship according to the Roman Catholic religion. The abolition of these galling restrictions was a distinct

relief to the Roman Catholics, who now began to emerge from the shadow of persecution, under which they had lived for the last two centuries Roman Catholic places of worship were now built without hindrance, and "missions" were established in different parts of England, not for the purpose of proselytising (the English Roman Catholics of that day did not proselytise), but solely for the purpose of ministering to the religious needs of the little communities of Roman Catholics scattered about the country The funds for this purpose were provided by wealthy members of the Church Among these was Mrs Fitzherbert, who not only endowed a mission at Brambridge, the village where she had grown up, but contributed towards the support of one at Brighton (The church there was not built until later) Her religion was part of her life, and she practised it regularly, but quietly and unobtrusively She seldom spoke of it, and never attempted, in the least degree, to influence others, or to proselytise This led many to suppose that she had given up her faith in compliance with the wishes of the Prince of Wales "I hear," writes one, "that Mrs Fitzherbert has renounced the errors of Popery and eats *maigre* no longer'[1] Nothing could be *further from the truth* The Prince never, in the slightest degree, attempted to hinder his wife in the practice of her religion, not even in times of popular excitement, when her attendance at Mass was likely to cause embarrassment Like the King, he favoured the Relief Acts

[1] "Charles Long to Viscount Lowther' Lonsdale MSS Historical MSS Commission

of 1778 and 1791. He was a friend of Sir John Throckmorton and other members of "the Catholic Committee," and he always showed the greatest courtesy to Roman Catholics. His views on the subject of Catholic Emancipation were not at this time known; it was generally supposed that he did not share the King's strong prejudice to admitting Roman Catholics to Parliament, but that he agreed on this subject with Fox and other leading Whigs. Mrs. Fitzherbert never obtruded her views on the burning question of Emancipation; she seemed rather to dread its discussion at Carlton House, and if the question came up she always changed the subject, lest it should seem that she influenced the Prince. Like so many of the English Roman Catholics at that time, she was singularly temperate in her views, and decidedly opposed to proselytising. Her views were rather those of Sir John Throckmorton and the Catholic Committee than of the ultramontane or "papistic" party. It was the fashion among many of the leading English Catholic laity at this time to deprecate undue interference from Rome, and to show rather that they had points of contact with the national religion.[1] No doubt a good deal of this was due to a desire to break down prejudice against a creed which was considered to be Italian and "un-English." They were anxious to show that Roman Catholics could be as loyal to the King and as tolerant of those

[1] But the Church of England was so spiritually dead at that time, that their overtures met with no response, and the strenuous protests of Archbishop Milner and the appointment of Vicars Apostolic by Rome checked this "Gallican" spirit, and brought the leading Roman Catholic laity into line again.

who differed from them as their fellow-subjects, and so work for the great cause of Emancipation. Mrs. Fitzherbert was not one of those who worked for Emancipation, either directly or indirectly. She seems to have been content with the free practice of her religion. At the same time, she was not, in any sense, unfaithful to her Church, nor forgetful of her co-religionists. An instance of the latter occurred in 1792 at Brighton.

The French Revolution was then in full blaze. Fugitives were flying from France in great numbers, many to find refuge in England. The burning of the Tuileries, the deposition and imprisonment of the King and Queen, and the massacres in Paris, had produced a profound impression in England, and the greatest sympathy was shown to the French *emigrés*. The edicts against priests and nuns led to monasteries being broken up, and the wholesale flight of religious communities. Among the sufferers was a community of Franciscan nuns, which were located at Montarges, where they had been established for many years. They were expelled with violence by the French revolutionists, and fled for their lives. At Ostend they embarked on a boat for England, and after many days at sea they were eventually landed at Shoreham, near Brighton. The poor nuns were set down on the shore from fishing-boats, wet, penniless, hungry, and with nothing but the clothes they stood up in. Mrs. Fitzherbert, who was then at Brighton, was one of the first to hear of their arrival. She immediately started a subscription among her friends at the Pavilion, and collected enough

to provide the nuns with food and lodging. She then drove to Shoreham, where she found the nuns still sitting on the beach, surrounded by a curious and sympathetic crowd. Mrs. Fitzherbert had them conveyed to Brighton, where she arranged a lodging for them in the Ship Inn. In this she was acting not only on her own charitable impulse, but on behalf of the Prince of Wales. His conduct on this occasion exhibits him in a favourable light, and shows how he could be moved to noble and generous actions. What happened to the nuns on their arrival at the Ship Inn is best told in the words of one of the members of the community.

"It was there (at the inn) that we learned the protection accorded to us by the Prince of Wales through the intervention of Mrs. Fitzherbert, who came herself to see us on our arrival. We did not, however, as yet know that the protection extended so far as to defray all our expenses in the town, and that all the nobility who were there had subscribed to this act of benevolence. . . . The Prince of Wales himself came to see the Reverend Mother. He entered into the minutest details of everything which concerned us." [He advised them to remain in England for a time until they could with safety return.] "The Prince again came to see us. This time he asked to see the community. The Reverend Mother having assembled us all, he received us with a kindness truly royal. He conjured the Reverend Mother (these were his words) to make the community sit down, while he remained standing. He repeated the advice which he had

given the evening before about our journey to Brussels, and he invited us in the most obliging terms to go to London, where we should find all the inhabitants disposed to recompense us for our losses. The want of chairs prevented many of us from being able to sit down. The Prince observed this, and, turning to Mrs. Fitzherbert, he said in that kind manner which is his characteristic, 'See, we are keeping them standing; let us be off, I cannot suffer this any longer.'"[1]

Nor did the Prince's sympathy stop here. He collected for the nuns over £100, and it was by his assistance and advice that they finally settled in England, and founded a religious house near Taunton. Another branch of the same order from Bruges (with which the Welds, Mrs. Fitzherbert's connections by her first marriage, were connected) also fled to England and found an asylum with Sir Edward Smythe (Mrs. Fitzherbert's cousin) at Acton Burnell. A Benedictine mission was also established there during this period. In England generally at this time the generous sentiment of hospitality and humanity overcame the feelings of prejudice against "Popish priests." The nuns were not the only fugitives who received a warm welcome. In one week, over five hundred French people (chiefly aristocrats and priests) were landed at Brighton, including the Archbishop of Avranches and the Dean of Rouen. The Marquise de Beaulé voyaged from Dieppe to Brighton in an open boat in a tempest, and was thrown upon the beach more

[1] This account is from a MS. preserved at St. Mary's Priory, Princethorpe, Taunton "Jerningham Letters."

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dead than alive. Her experience was that of many aristocratic ladies of France.

Perhaps the most interesting of these unfortunate fugitives was the young and beautiful Duchesse de Noailles, who fled from Paris for her life, disguised in boy's clothes; she found a fishing-boat at Dieppe, was concealed in a coil of cable, and after many days at sea was landed upon Brighton beach, one gusty morning, August 29, 1792. As soon as her arrival became known she "was received with the most polite and cordial hospitality by his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales and Mrs. Fitzherbert."[1] The Duchesse stayed with Mrs. Fitzherbert until other accommodation could be found for her, and when she had recovered from her fatigue she was dressed up in some of Mrs. Fitzherbert's clothes, and entertained with all possible honour by the Prince at the Pavilion. We read: "Mrs. Fitzherbert, the Duchesse de Noailles, and many other ladies of distinction were present at the cricket match, and dined in a marquee pitched on the ground for that purpose. The Prince's band of music attended, and played during the whole time the ladies were at dinner. In the evening Mrs. Fitzherbert, the Duchesse, Lady Clermont, and Miss Pigot" [Mrs. Fitzherbert's lady companion] "walked round the ground, seemingly the better to gratify the spectators with a sight of the French lady. The Duchesse de Noailles appears to be twenty-one or twenty-two years of age. She is very handsome, and her figure and deportment are remarkably interesting."[2]

[1] *Sussex Weekly Advertiser*, September 3, 1792.
[2] Ibid., September 10, 1792.

All this goes to show that Mrs Fitzherbert's influence over the Prince showed no signs of wane As Lord Malmesbury wrote in June 1792, "The Prince was more attached to Mrs Fitzherbert than ever he is now more under her influence than ever Perhaps the strongest proof of her influence at this time is that she succeeded in maintaining the estrangement between the Prince and Fox, which had assumed a political as well as a personal aspect With this the French Revolution had something to do for the bloody excesses of the revolutionary mob had alienated the sympathy of the moderate Whigs and led to a split in the party, the Duke of Portland and Burke representing the moderate wing and Fox the extremists The Prince, who had no sympathy for the revolutionary doctrines of Fox, sided with Burke and this despite the efforts of the Duchess of Devonshire on behalf of Fox There is little doubt that Mrs Fitzherbert, who viewed the French Revolution with horror and Fox with detestation, had something to say in this matter In any event after Burke's quarrel with Fox, and his "dagger scene in the House of Commons the Prince also separated himself from Fox, and for six years had little communication with him

For the next two years (from 1792 to 1794) the Prince and Mrs Fitzherbert led a comparatively secluded life This was in part forced upon the Prince by circumstances His debts were again causing him grave embarrassment. The usual appeal to the King was made, and met with the usual refusal Again came the Prince's ostentatious retrenchment, Carlton House shut up, th ' ' old

reduced, and the horses sold. The Prince was very little in London during these years. When he was not at Brighton he would take a place in the country, and live there the life of a country gentleman. He gave himself up completely to the pleasures of country life; his chief diversion was hunting. He was devoted to horses, and, notwithstanding his weight, he was a first-rate rider. It used to be a saying at Brighton that, heavy as he was, "he rode so well that he never soiled his nankeens." For the most part the Prince hunted in Hampshire, where he resided for one season at the Grange, near Alton, which he rented or borrowed from Lord Ashburton, and he hunted with the Villebois hounds. The Prince of Wales's plumes still appear on the club buttons. His choice of Hampshire, and that part of it in particular, was no doubt influenced by Mrs. Fitzherbert, whose mother and brothers still lived at Brambridge, and her uncle Mr. Errington and her cousin Harry Errington (a friend of the Prince of Wales) at Red Rice, near Andover. So attached was the Prince to this neighbourhood, that he rented for many years a place called Kempshott, where still linger legends of his tenancy. Mrs. Fitzherbert always accompanied the Prince of Wales on his visits to Hampshire; but she seems generally to have resided at a cottage near by. At Kempshott she chose the decorations of the drawing-room, and the gardens are also said to have been laid out under her direction. The Prince in after years used to say that some of his happiest days were passed at Kempshott. He had as fine a pack of foxhounds in his kennel, and as splendid a lot of hunters in his

Duke of Gloucester told her that "the marriage between the Prince and Mrs. Fitzherbert was without much love on either side. He had his amusements elsewhere, but he had much consideration for her. She was sometimes jealous and discontented; her temper violent, though apparently so quiet. He hoped . . . the Prince would remain in her hands, as she was no political intriguer, and probably, if they parted, he would fall into worse hands."[1]

So matters went on until early in the year 1794, when Mrs. Fitzherbert's position suffered an indirect blow from the annulment of the marriage of Prince Augustus Frederick,[2] a younger brother of the Prince of Wales, with Lady Augusta Murray, daughter of the Earl of Dunmore. The story of this marriage is one of the romances of the House of Hanover. Augustus Frederick, like all the younger sons of George III., spent much of his youth abroad. In the winter of 1792–93 he was in delicate health, and was sent to Rome under the care of a governor, to escape the rigours of the English climate. He was then in his twentieth year. Rome was at that time one of the gayest and most cosmopolitan cities in Europe, and there was a large colony of English residents and visitors. Among the English staying at Rome that winter were the Countess of Dunmore and her family. Her husband, the Earl of Dunmore, was not with her; he was occupied with his duties as Governor

[1] Mrs. Harcourt's "Diary."

[2] Augustus Frederick, Duke of Sussex (1773–1843), sixth son of George III.



THE DUKE OF SUSSEX



THE PRINCESS ELIZABETH

DAUGHTER OF GEORGE III

Landgravine of Hesse Homburgh

of the Bahama Islands[1] Lady Augusta Murray was the eldest daughter of a numerous family She was a lady of beauty, wit, and talent Prince Augustus Frederick fell in love with her, and after four months' courtship he, unknown to her mother, offered her marriage Lady Augusta at first refused her lover, and pointed out to him the obstacles in the way of their union, but her opposition only increased the young Prince's passion, and in the end she gave way It was the usual story first of all she promised never to marry any one else, then they bound themselves by a solemn betrothal according to the fashion of the time This betrothal was a preliminary to the marriage which followed

There was in Rome at that time a clergyman of the English Church, named Gunn, and to him the Prince appealed Despite the penalties of the Royal Marriage Act, the clergyman consented to perform the ceremony of marriage between Prince Augustus Frederick and Lady Augusta and in April 1793 they were secretly married at Rome, according to the rites of the Church of England by Mr Gunn, but without witnesses Some months later it became necessary that Lady Augusta should tell her mother of the marriage. Dismayed and bewildered, Lady Dunmore consented to keep it secret until its validity could be decided In the autumn of 1793 the Prince and the Dunmore family returned to England, and there the Prince learned that, apart from the Royal Marriage Act, the fact

[1] John Murray, fourth Earl of Dunmore (173 1809) Governor of New York and Virginia (previous to the American War) was appointed Governor of the Bahamas 1787

ward ending was watched with keen interest by Mrs. Fitzherbert. The decision of the Court of Privileges made it clear to her that, even if her marriage were acknowledged at some future time, it would always be regarded as illegal. For if Lady Augusta Murray's marriage to Prince Augustus Frederick (a sixth son, and thus far removed from the succession to the throne) was refused the approval of the King and the sanction of the law, what chance had Mrs. Fitzherbert, who had married the heir-apparent, of any recognition? Lady Augusta Murray was a member of the Church of England, Mrs. Fitzherbert was a member of the Church of Rome. Moreover, Lady Augusta, though a subject, could boast of royal descent on both sides. This fact might have led George III. to pause before he cast a slur upon this virtuous woman, for her pedigree was an illustrious one, in a sense as illustrious as that of his consort from Mecklenburg-Strelitz. True, Lady Augusta was British and not German. On her father's side she could trace back her lineage, through the Stanleys, to the daughter of Henry VII. of England; through the same line she could establish her descent from William I., Prince of Orange, and Louis, Duke of Montpensier; again, from the same source she could show her descent from Charles VII. of France. On the side of her mother, who was a Stuart, she could trace back her descent *in the direct line* to the Hamiltons, Dukes of Chatelherault, and to James II., King of Scotland. Surely the daughter of an earl with a pedigree like this was as fit a mate for a younger son of a King of England, as some obscure German princess? But

German traditions unfortunately prevailed in the court of George III., and thus Lady Augusta was placed in the light of the Prince's mistress, and an insult was cast not only upon her, but on her family, and through them on the whole body of the British peerage.

The decision of the Court of Privileges finally closed the door upon Mrs. Fitzherbert's hopes of restitution, had any remained after the denials of her marriage in Parliament. It was now made clear to her, beyond any shadow of doubt, that she had nothing to trust to but the honour of her husband, and events soon showed that she trusted to a broken reed.

CHAPTER XVI

THE FIRST SEPARATION

(1794-1795)

By this time the Prince's affairs were again in a desperate condition, and it became obvious, even to him, that the day of reckoning could not be delayed much longer. Sunk in debt and difficulties, he was at his wits' end for money. All the usual sources of relief were closed to him; the Jews and money-lenders would not advance him a penny more. Wearied by fruitless applications, and disgusted with barren promises, many of the Prince's tradesmen refused any longer to execute his orders, and, denied admission to his palace, some of them stopped him in the streets with demands for payment; even the workmen employed at Carlton House solicited their wages in vain, and at last presented a petition for payment to the Prime Minister, who referred them back to the Prince. Never was Prince in so pitiful a plight before. Driven to desperation, he tried to raise money at exorbitant interest on *post obits* on the King's life; these deeds were signed by the Prince of Wales and his two brothers, the Dukes of York and Clarence. Double the sum lent was to be repaid when the King died, or any of the three royal brothers came to the throne. But even these

terms failed to tempt the lenders, for only some £30,000 was raised The Prince went further still, and offered £10,000 and an Irish peerage after the King's death for every £5000 lent to him now But even for this reward he could raise little or nothing, so dishonoured were his bonds Few would believe his promises, even when given in *writing for so many accusations had been brought* against him of breach of faith, and repudiation of obligations Besides it was well known that the Prince regarded all those to whom he owed money as his worst enemies

By the middle of the year 1793 the Prince of Wales had exhausted every resource, and was forced to apply once more to the King Lord Malmesbury was in London at the time the Prince sent for him, and told him the tale of his 'total ruin" Several executions had been in his house, he said, Lord Rawdon had saved him from one, but what was one among so many? his debts amounted to £375 000 Lord Malmesbury was implored to bring the matter before the King and to tell him in the event of refusal that the Prince must break up his establishment and live abroad Lord Malmesbury seems to have shifted the task on to Lord Southampton, who (he must have been used to it by this time) drew up yet another schedule of the Prince s debts, and laid it before the King But the King was obdurate In vain the Prince promised retrench ment and reform, the King heard him unmoved The King's position was much stronger than in 1787, when the Prince had forced his hand

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From a variety of causes George III. was now popular with the country. The violence of the French Revolution had, by contrast, increased the popularity of the monarchy in England. It had also shattered the Whig party. The Prince was estranged from Fox, the only man who could have carried the matter of his debts through the House of Commons, and he had no friends of importance in either House of Parliament. The King was master of the situation, and could dictate terms to his son. His terms were these:—The Prince of Wales must marry some Protestant Princess of Germany. With so large a royal family of sons and daughters there seemed no danger to the succession to the throne. But none of them was married except the Duke of York, and his marriage had turned out badly; moreover, the Duchess had no children, and the doctors said she was unlikely ever to have any. The unhappiness of this marriage of policy did not deter the King from urging a similar marriage on his eldest son. His terms were absolute. If the Prince would not marry as he wished, he would not move a step to have his debts paid. Indeed he would go further, and instruct the Government to oppose any, and every, application in Parliament.

At first the Prince refused to entertain the idea, as he had refused before. He knew that he was in honour bound to Mrs. Fitzherbert, and though he would not publicly acknowledge his marriage to her, yet in his heart he recoiled from the perjury involved by his deserting her and marrying some one else. It was a struggle between his conscience and his neces-

sities, and while this struggle was going on there came the momentous decision of the Court of Privileges, dissolving the marriage of Prince Augustus Frederick and Lady Augusta Murray This decision, pronounced by the highest legal authorities in the realm not only annulled the marriage but expressly left the Prince free to marry again if he would Coming when it did, the pronouncement was not without influence on the volatile mind of the Prince of Wales It did not quiet his conscience altogether, but it stifled it It shifted the responsibility from his own shoulders to those of the eminent jurists who gave the decision, and built a golden bridge for him to retreat, if he wished from his solemn engagement to Mrs Fitzherbert Yet even so he hesitated, for despite their occasional quarrels caused by his infidelities and the difficulties which arose from her religion, Mrs Fitzherbert was still the first woman in the world to him and so far as he loved any one he loved her While he stood thus at the parting of the ways, his evil genius appeared on the scene in the shape of Frances, Countess of Jersey[1]

Lady Jersey, who before her marriage had been known as the "beautiful Miss Twysden,' was the daughter of an Irish Bishop, and married Lord Jersey, who held high office in the court of George III Ever susceptible to the charms of female beauty, the fickle Prince fell a victim to her wiles At the time the Prince came under her influence Lady

[1] Frances Countess of Jersey, daughter of the Bishop of Raphoe, who married the fourth Earl of Jersey, Lord Chamberlain and Master of the Buckhounds

Jersey was well past her youth, and the mother of a numerous family—indeed she was already a grandmother. To the Prince her mature age was an additional attraction, for, in the earlier part of his life, he always preferred women older than himself. Lady Jersey was still in the meridian of her charms, and she was undoubtedly a fascinating woman. Wraxall speaks of her "irresistible fascination and charm." Her beauty was of a type which appealed wholly to the senses, but she had wit and ambition with it. She was a passionate, an unprincipled, and intriguing woman, yet withal a very fine lady. She was a great friend of Lady Harcourt,[1] and through her a favourite of Queen Charlotte. From the moment that chance threw her in the Prince's way she used all her arts to enslave him, and before long he was completely subjugated. Her rank and position at court made her different from those other ladies of whom he had made easy conquests, and the difference lent a zest. Queen Charlotte soon came to know of the Prince of Wales's infatuation for Lady Jersey. The Queen posed as a dragon of virtue, and no doubt she was so, but in this case, so far from disapproving of her son's *liaison*, she seemed rather to encourage it; at least she did not withdraw her favour from Lady Jersey, who stood higher with her than before. Queen Charlotte was anxious to break Mrs. Fitzherbert's influence over her son, and Lady Jersey, knowing this, at once set to work to undermine it. She piqued the Prince's vanity by repeating the current gossip

[1] Lady Harcourt was Lady of the Bedchamber to Queen Charlotte; Lord Harcourt was Master of the Horse to George III.

that Mrs. Fitzherbert cared for his rank alone. She artfully insinuated that his continual connection with a Roman Catholic was the sole cause of his unpopularity, she exaggerated the Protestant prejudice against her, she sympathised with the Prince in his money troubles, and hinted that Mrs. Fitzherbert was an insuperable obstacle to their settlement; she made light of that lady's claims upon the Prince, she urged that he was not bound to her in any way, that he was perfectly free to marry whom he wished. Had not eminent lawyers and godly bishops decided to that effect in the case of Prince Augustus Frederick? Mrs. Fitzherbert was taking an unfair advantage of an act of boyish folly. Lady Jersey knew the wishes of the King and Queen with regard to the Prince's marriage to a German princess, and she imagined that if she could bring it about she would advance her own interests at court. Such a marriage of policy, she argued, would render the breach with Mrs. Fitzherbert complete and final. On the other hand, it would not affect *her* influence over the Prince, for he was sure to regard his wife with indifference, and she (Lady Jersey) would reign supreme.

The Prince listened to the voice of the temptress, and the fact that he listened showed her that he was yielding. Perhaps he was willing to be persuaded, and when persuasion came from such a quarter he could not resist it. The combined effect of Lady Jersey's allurements and arguments, and his own desperate financial condition, proved too strong for the Prince; he yielded so far as to take

the preliminary step of breaking with Mrs. Fitzherbert.

The blow came in June 1794, and found Mrs. Fitzherbert quite unprepared. She was then staying at her villa near Richmond, and the Prince was at Brighton. Mrs. Fitzherbert intended to go to Brighton later. In the meanwhile the Prince had arranged to meet her at dinner at the Duke of Clarence's at Bushey on a certain day. She had no idea that anything was wrong between them; for she had recently received the following hurried note from the Prince at Brighton:—

"MY DEAR LOVE,—I have just receiv'd a letter from my Sister by the [illegible] this Evening, desiring me to come to Windsor, which tho' exceptionally inconvenient to me at this moment in particular, owing to my being to give my annual Regimental dinner on Wednesday, I mean to comply with, & set out to-morrow morning early, having put off my dinner & all my Company to Friday. I therefore mean to pass Wednesday in London & return here on Thursday—I have just been dining at the General's, where we have had a very pleasant and a very jolly party. Adieu my dear Love, excuse haste,—Ever Thine,

"G. P.

"BRIGHTON, *June* 23, 1794."[1]

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[1] This letter was found among Mrs. Fitzherbert's papers after her death; it was one of the few which escaped being burnt in 1833, probably because she had mislaid it. It is endorsed in her own handwriting, "This letter I receaved the mor^g of the day the Prince sent me word, he would never enter my house (Lady Jersey's influence)." The letter was lent me by one who cherishes the memory of Mrs. Fitzherbert.

When Mrs Fitzherbert arrived at the Duke of Clarence's she found the Prince was not there But a letter from him was given to her, saying he would never enter her house again Lord Stourton gives the following account of the episode, which though it does not wholly tally with the foregoing letter, may be regarded as substantially correct —"Her first separation from the Prince was preceded by no quarrel or even coolness, and came upon her quite unexpectedly She received, when sitting down to dinner at the table of William IV, then Duke of Clarence, the first intimation of the loss of her ascendency over the affections of the Prince, having only the preceding day received a note from his Royal Highness, written in his usual strain of friendship, and speaking of their appointed engagement to dine at the house of the Duke of Clarence The Prince's letter was written from Brighton, where he had met Lady Jersey From that time she never saw the Prince "[1]

Mrs Fitzherbert knew the quarter whence the blow came, she knew that Lady Jersey was with the Prince, and, wounded in her love and her pride, she made no answer to his letter, and seems to have had no further communication with him, at least directly As the Prince gave no explanation for his extraordinary conduct, she sought none She abandoned her intention of going to Brighton for the summer, and for a short time she appears to have gone abroad Some say she went to Switzerland, and from the troubled state of France at the time, this seems a probable place of her

[1] Langdale, *op cit*

retreat. It is said that the Prince repented after a few days, and was anxious to see her and offer an explanation. But she withdrew without a word, and left the field clear for her rival. From a tactical point of view this was a mistake, for with so unstable a character as the Prince, "out of sight, out of mind," was always true. Her silence seemed to him a proof that she no longer loved him. Perhaps, had she been more yielding, what happened later would never have taken place.

Meanwhile rumour, which had so often prophesied the separation, was busy again. Lord Mornington writes to Lord Grenville (Brighton, July 15, 1794): "I heard last night from no less authority than Tom the Third[1] that a treaty of separation and provision is on foot (if not already concluded) between his Royal Highness and the late 'Princess Fitz.' I think you ought to marry his Royal Highness to some *frow* immediately; and I am told (by the same eminent authority) that he is very well disposed to take such a wife, as it may be his Majesty's pleasure to provide for him."[2]

The surmise proved correct. Swayed by the prompting of self-interest, worried by his debts, influenced by the sensuous wiles of Lady Jersey, resentful at the way in which Mrs. Fitzherbert had received his communication, giving him silence when he had expected tears, contempt instead of entreaties and reproaches, the Prince stifled the voice of his conscience and made the plunge.

[1] Mr. Thomas William Coke of Holkham, first Earl of Leicester (1752–1842), also known as "King Tom."

[2] Fortescue MSS. Historical MSS. Com., vol. ii.

Within six weeks of his breaking from Mrs. Fitzherbert the Prince announced to the King his willingness to agree to his terms and marry as his father wished. Having at last brought himself to the point, the Prince did not care who his bride was, provided his debts were paid. He had to seek a wife among the Protestant princesses of Germany, and he is reported to have said "that one d——d German *frow* was as good as another." Among this great company of marriageable princesses two stood out pre-eminently—Louise, Princess of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, niece of Queen Charlotte, and Caroline, Princess of Brunswick, niece of George III.

The former princess, Princess Louise, was infinitely superior in beauty, refinement, and abilities to the other. She afterwards became the famous Queen Louise of Prussia. But unfortunately for England (though perhaps fortunately for herself), the Prince would not hear of her as a wife; she was his mother's niece, her favourite candidate for the honour of his hand, and that was sufficient for him to refuse her. He had no wish to raise a second princess of the house of Mecklenburg to the throne of England; "one of that family was enough," he said rudely. His choice fell on his first cousin, Caroline of Brunswick, whose mother, the King's sister, was by birth an Englishwoman. His choice is said to have been dictated by Lady Jersey, to whom the unsuitable character of this Princess was known by report. Nothing could be farther from her schemes than that the Prince should fall in love with his wife,

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as he might have done had he married the beautiful and accomplished Princess Louise. Therefore, to quote Lord Holland: "She [Lady Jersey] may have decided his preference for a woman of indelicate manners, indifferent character, and not very inviting appearance, from the hope that disgust for the wife would secure constancy to the mistress." Thus came about the Prince's strange choice of Caroline of Brunswick, strange because if he had searched all over Europe he could not have found a princess more unsuited to him in every respect. The Prince did not trouble to make any inquiries about his bride. Having made up his mind to marry, he acted, as he always did, in a hurry; perhaps he feared that if he delayed or hesitated longer his conscience might awaken. He went to the King at once. "The Prince of Wales," said Lord Liverpool, "told his father very abruptly one day, on his return from hunting, that he wished to marry. 'Well,' said the King, 'I will then, with your consent, send some confidential person to report on the Protestant princesses of the stated age and character, but qualified for such an alliance. Your wife must be a Protestant and a princess: in all other respects your choice is unfettered.' 'It is made,' replied the Prince; 'the daughter of the Duke of Brunswick.' George III. replied that to his own niece he could take no exception; but yet he recommended his son to make more circumstantial inquiries about her person and manners, &c. The Prince pretended to have done so."[1]

[1] "Memoirs of the Whig Party." Lord Liverpool in 1820 gave Lord Holland the above account, saying that he had it directly from George III.

The King lost no time in communicating the glad news to his Prime Minister; he wrote to Pitt:—

"WEYMOUTH, *August* 24, 1794.

"Agreeable to what I mentioned to Mr. Pitt before I came here, I have this morning seen the Prince of Wales, who has acquainted me with his having broken off all connection with Mrs. Fitzherbert, and his desire of entering into a more creditable line of life by marrying; expressing at the same time that my niece, the Princess of Brunswick, may be the person. Undoubtedly she is the person who naturally must be most agreeable to *me*. I expressed my approbation of the idea, provided his plan was to lead a life that would make him appear respectable, and consequently render the Princess happy. He assured me that he perfectly coincided with me in opinion. I then said that till Parliament assembled, no arrangement could be taken except my sounding my sister, that no idea of any other marriage may be encouraged.[1]

"G. R."

The King then set about "sounding his sister," an empty phrase, for the Duchess of Brunswick,[2] who dearly loved her native country, was over-joyed at the brilliant prospect thus opened to her daughter. In November the indispensable Lord

[1] Lord Stanhope's "Life of Pitt," ii. 22. (Appendix

[2] Augusta, eldest daughter of Frederick Prince of Wales and sister of George III. (1737-1813), married Charles William, Duke of Brunswick.

Malmesbury was despatched to Brunswick to settle the details of the marriage treaty and to bring the bride to England.

So far nothing had been made public on the subject, but rumour, always busy, travelled even to Mrs. Fitzherbert in her retirement and whispered of the projected marriage of the Prince of Wales. She had heard the rumour so often before, that at first she discredited it, for she remembered his vows and promises. But the rumour became so persistent and so explicit that her heart misgave her. The Prince's silence too was ominous. The first flush of her anger and grief at his letter had now subsided; she could review matters more calmly. She began to make excuses for him; she attributed their misunderstanding to Lady Jersey, but she did not believe that lady could maintain her sway very long; she knew, or thought she knew, the Prince's character too well. He had often gone astray before, and had always come back to her, after a longer or a shorter interval, penitent and full of promises of amendment. She had forgiven so much and overlooked so much that this time she had determined to be sterner. Therefore she had returned no answer to his letter (he did not indeed ask for one) and had gone away without a word. But when the weeks passed and she heard nothing from him it began to be borne in upon her that this estrangement was likely to be serious. She blamed herself for having acted so hastily in going abroad. She returned to England in September and went to her villa at Richmond. There the rumour again assailed her that the Prince

of Wales was betrothed to a German princess. Yet still she persisted in disbelieving, in hoping against hope. At last, in November, she was informed from an authoritative source that the Prince was going to marry his cousin, the Princess Caroline of Brunswick.

To Mrs. Fitzherbert the news came as a crushing blow, an overwhelming revelation of the Prince's perfidy. It was a public repudiation of her, even more damaging than Fox's memorable speech in Parliament. Her happiness, her dignity, her fortune, all suffered by it, and though she knew herself to be his wife in the sight of her Church (which was to her in the sight of God), in the eyes of the world she was made to appear nothing but a cast-off mistress. Lady Augusta Murray, though repudiated by the law, had at least consolation in the fact that her marriage, whether legal or illegal, was publicly acknowledged to have taken place, and her husband maintained that she was his wife, notwithstanding the decision of the courts of law. Mrs. Fitzherbert had no such consolation, The fact of her marriage had been twice denied in Parliament, and her husband now had publicly repudiated her. She had in her possession documents which proved beyond all doubt that she was married to the Prince, and, if she chose to publish them, her character would be cleared. It was in her power to inflict a most damaging blow on the man who had thus betrayed her, yet the thought of taking such revenge never crossed her mind. Even now, when he did her the cruellest wrong a man could do a woman, she loved him, and was disposed to make excuses

for him, laying the blame on his desperate plight, and on his evil advisers rather than on himself.

Soon after the news of the betrothal had been communicated to her, Mrs. Fitzherbert received a communication from the Prince's lawyers informing her that the £3000 a year which had been granted to her since her marriage would be continued as before. Her first impulse was to refuse it, but at this point her uncle, Mr. Errington, intervened, and positively forbade her to do so. He, like all Mrs. Fitzherbert's relatives and friends, was full of sympathy for her, but he knew the volatile character of the Prince, and he took the view that the separation, which had now come, was inevitable sooner or later—the only wonder to him was that it had not come before. He had tried in 1785 to dissuade his niece from this ill-advised union, but as she was inflexible, he satisfied himself that the marriage would be valid according to the law of his Church, and then let things go. So, now that separation had come, he was too wise to remonstrate with either of the parties, but contented himself with looking after his niece's interests as well as he could. The task was easy, for Mr. Errington found the Prince more than ready to meet him half-way. The offer to continue the annuity of £3000 was quite spontaneous on the part of the Prince. More than that, he had requested the Lord Chancellor, Lord Loughborough, to ask the King, in the event of the Prince's death before that of his father, to take it upon himself to continue to Mrs. Fitzherbert the pension. To this

George III. consented without demur. The Lord Chancellor wrote to the Prince of Wales:—

"*December* 19, 1794.

"SIR,—In obedience to your Royal Highness's commands, I had the honour of representing to His Majesty the anxiety you had expressed lest a possible though very improbable event might interrupt the continuance of that provision you had thought proper to make for a Lady who had been distinguished by your regard, and at the same time to express the hope your Royal Highness entertained that in such an event his Majesty's goodness might extend to the prolongation of it. His Majesty was pleased to receive this communication in the most gracious manner, observing at the same time that in the natural order of things the occasion was not likely to present itself, but that your Royal Highness had no reason to entertain any uneasiness on this account.

"I have the honour to be, with the most perfect devotion, Sir, your Royal Highness's most faithful and most obedient servant,

"LOUGHBOROUGH."

The Prince sent this letter to Miss Pigot, and asked her to give it to Mrs. Fitzherbert as an additional proof of his care for her future welfare.[1] The incident is creditable both to the Prince and

[1] Mrs Fitzherbert in 1833 placed the letter among her papers deposited at Coutts's Bank, though it does not appear in the list given by Langdale, *op. cit.* p. 87. It is published here by permission of his Majesty the King.

the King. George III., though he did not know the whole truth about his son's illegal marriage, recognised that Mrs. Fitzherbert had special claims on his consideration. Queen Charlotte recognised them also, and from this time forward both the King and the Queen showed her unvarying kindness. Perhaps their consciences were not quite easy about the way she had been treated, and this made them the kinder. Lord Stourton says that Mrs. Fitzherbert frequently assured him:—"That there was not one of the royal family who had not acted with kindness to her. She particularly instanced the Queen; and, as for George III., from the time she set footing in England till he ceased to reign, had he been her own father, he could not have acted towards her with greater tenderness and affection." This reads like exaggeration, unless the words "from the time she set footing in England" refer to her return from Switzerland in 1794, when the negotiations for her future provision were pending. Previously to that date George III. does not seem to have shown her any consideration, and his allusion to her in his letter to Mr. Pitt could hardly be described as paternal.

No hint of this confidential negotiation reached the public ear. The air was thick with rumour and conjecture, but beyond the fact that the Prince and Mrs. Fitzherbert had separated, *nothing* definite was known. Later it leaked out that an adequate provision had been made for her, and evidence of the completeness of the separation was given to the world by Mrs. Fitzherbert's selling her mansion in Pall Mall and giving up her house at Brighton.

A few days after George *III.* had guaranteed the continuance of Mrs. Fitzherbert's pension, in the event of the prior death of his eldest son, the King announced the forthcoming marriage in a speech which he delivered to both houses of Parliament on December 30, 1794. "I have," said his Majesty, "the greatest satisfaction in announcing to you the conclusion of a treaty of marriage between my dear son, the Prince of Wales, and the Princess Caroline, daughter of the Duke of Brunswick." Then he went on to recommend that a suitable provision be made for the Prince's establishment. This was the first official announcement of the marriage.

The public curiosity was great. What would Mrs. Fitzherbert say? What would she do? But Mrs. Fitzherbert uttered no cry, and made no complaint. She closed her doors to her friends, and went into retirement as though she were widowed, thus escaping the sympathy of those who wished her well, and the curious gaze of the vulgar. In this, as in all crises of her life, her conduct was admirable in its dignity and self-restraint.

Meanwhile preparations for the marriage between the Prince of Wales and Princess Caroline of Brunswick went on apace. Lord Malmesbury has told us in full the story of his mission to Brunswick,[1] where the bride-elect resided. There is no need to repeat it here. Suffice it to say that Lord Malmesbury records from the first that he had misgivings; but his judgment of the Princess was perhaps prejudiced. Princess Caroline had her good qualities, but they were apparently those which this courtier

[1] Malmesbury, *op. cit.*

and diplomatist was incapable of appreciating. She was warm-hearted, candid, generous, and brave. There was nothing mean or paltry in her disposition, and with a kindly and judicious guide she might have developed into a fine character. Lord Malmesbury saw in her only an ungraceful and undignified young woman, whose florid good looks and boisterous good-humour were marked by an utter absence of dignity and refinement. Her conversation was broad, sometimes even coarse; she was careless in her dress and not very cleanly in her person. She was given to making the most indiscreet confidences, and to cultivating excessive familiarity with her inferiors. The *maîtresse en titre* of the Duke of Brunswick thus spoke of her to Lord Malmesbury, in words that were almost prophetic: "She is not corrupted; she has never done anything really bad, but she has no command of her words; she confides in every one, and when she is surrounded in London with clever intriguers, everything she says will be repeated and distorted."[1] It may be added that, though no beauty, she was not bad-looking. Mrs. Harcourt writes, "In looks there is some resemblance to what Mrs. Fitzherbert was when young." And again, "She is all openness of heart, and has not a shadow of pride."[2]

The Princess Caroline made no concealment of her delight at the prospect of becoming Princess of Wales; she was not hypocritical enough to profess either respect or affection for her future husband;

[1] Lord Malmesbury's "Memoirs."
[2] "Harcourt Papers." (The Hon. Mrs. Harcourt was the wife of General Harcourt.)



THE PRINCESS CAROLINE OF BRUNSWICK

(From a Picture in the Palace at Brunswick)

she had never seen him, [illegible] and his mode of life, [illegible] concerning matters [illegible] better taste for [illegible] heard the rumours [illegible] herbert, but [illegible] and therefore [illegible] There [illegible] spurious [illegible]

[illegible]

had been so minded. He probably did not care a straw for these rumours. It was not a wife he wanted, but money; and so long as the wife was the means of his getting the money, he cared for little else. He was already prejudiced against the Princess. The moment Lady Jersey knew that the marriage-treaty was signed, she left off poisoning the Prince's mind against Mrs. Fitzherbert, and concentrated all her energies on maligning his betrothed bride. She repeated and exaggerated all the gossip and scandal she could gather regarding the Princess Caroline and her early life. Queen Charlotte, who was annoyed by the Prince's curt refusal of her niece, the Princess Louise, was also prejudiced against Princess Caroline. Years ago she had quarrelled with her mother, and was prepared to keep up the family feud with the daughter. She even consented to the appointment of Lady Jersey (though the relations between the Prince and that lady were notorious) as lady-in-waiting to the new Princess of Wales.

Lord Malmesbury brought the Princess to England in July 1795. Mrs. Harcourt had attended her from Hanover, and Lady Jersey went down to meet the Princess on her landing with smooth words on her lips, and malice and hatred in her heart. "Thus did she arrive in England, conducted by her bitterest enemy (a lady well practised in the arts of tormenting, insulting, and degrading a rival) to a husband half estranged already, with no protection but at court, where, if the King was disposed to take part against his heir-apparent, old resentments and recent disappointments rendered the Queen

averse to the daughter of the Duchess of Brunswick."[1]

The friendless Princess was alone; her mother had parted from her at Stade, and it was not permitted that any one of her country-women should come with her. Her habit of indiscreet confidences began at once. She confided to Lady Jersey on the road to London the tale of an early attachment to a man of inferior birth, and Lady Jersey afterwards repeated every word she had said with gross exaggerations to the Prince of Wales. The story of her arrival in London and her reception by the Prince of Wales is well known. As soon as the Princess arrived at St. James's Palace, Lord Malmesbury went to tell the Prince of Wales. He came immediately; it was noticed that he was agitated. What followed is best told by Lord Malmesbury: "I, according to the established etiquette, introduced (no one else being in the room) the Princess Caroline to him. She, very properly, in consequence of my saying that it was the right mode of proceeding, attempted to kneel to him. He raised her gracefully enough and embraced her, said barely one word, turned round, retired to a distant part of the apartment, and, calling to me, said: 'Harris, I am not well: pray get me a glass of brandy.' I said: 'Sir, had you not better have a glass of water?' Upon which he, much out of humour, said *with an oath:* 'No; I will go directly to the Queen.' And away he went."

Surely there never was a stranger scene. The Princess, astounded at this extraordinary reception,—

[1] Holland, *op cit.*

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[1] Holland, *op. cit.*

exclaimed: "*Mon Dieu!* is he always like that?" Then she added, "I find him *very fat*, and not at all like the picture sent me." Lord Malmesbury tried to make excuses for him, but the Princess was much too shrewd to be imposed upon. She was much disappointed, not only with her reception, but with the person of her future husband, and she proceeded to make many more uncomplimentary remarks.

In the evening there was a small dinner party at St. James's, at which the Prince and his betrothed met again. The Princess had by now recovered her spirits; she was probably very nervous, she was certainly much excited, and not at all like what a modest bride should be. She talked incessantly. Lord Malmesbury speaks of her "flippant, rattling, affected wit." She rallied the Prince before all the company on his well-known *penchant* with absolute lack of discretion. The Prince was disgusted. Some excuse must be made for the Princess on this occasion. She had already discovered the *liaison* between her future husband and Lady Jersey. It hurt her to the quick, and she assumed this air of pertness in order to pretend that she did not care. "The first moment I saw my *futur* and Lady Jersey together I knew how it all was," she said later, "and I said to myself, 'Oh, very well.' I took my *partie*."[1] When the dinner was over the King and Queen, and the other members of the royal family came to welcome the Princess. It was noticed that the King was cordial and affectionate, but the Queen was very cold.

During the three days that elapsed between the

[1] Bury, *op. cit.*

arrival of the Princess Caroline and the marriage, the Prince of Wales was in a whirl of feeling and nervous agitation He found his bride even less to his taste than Lady Jersey had predicted, he already disliked her, and this dislike, says Lord Malmesbury, "when left to herself the Princess had not the talent to remove, but by observing the same giddy manners and the same coarse sarcasm increased it until it became positive hatred" Yet it was not to Lady Jersey that the Prince's thoughts reverted, but to his discarded wife, Maria Fitzherbert Not all the allurements of Lady Jersey, nor all the potations in which he freely indulged, could dull the voice of conscience His love for her had returned with tenfold force, and he shrank with abhorrence from doing her the wrong involved by this marriage, more especially doubtless because the bride was so little to his liking He bitterly upbraided his father and mother for having urged him to marry He cursed his own weakness in yielding The King resented this vacillation, and said testily that he would take the responsibility of breaking off the marriage if the Prince really wished it But as this involved the non payment of the Prince's debts, they were merely idle words The Queen, who suspected the truth, contented herself by saying, "*You know, George, it* is for *you* to say whether you can marry the Princess or not," thus adroitly shifting the responsibility off her own shoulders. The Prince lacked the courage to face the situation, yet he was torn between two opinions The day before his marriage he rode down to Richmond, and galloped passed Mrs herbert's house, thus showing with w

thoughts were. She saw him riding by; no doubt he intended that she should see him, and perhaps had she made any sign, even then, at the eleventh hour he would have broken off the match. But she made none. At the clubs bets were offered freely against the Prince's marriage coming off. The wagers were lost.

The Prince of Wales was married to the Princess Caroline of Brunswick in the Chapel Royal, St. James's, on the evening of April 8, 1795. The marriage was celebrated with the usual state and magnificence, and with every sign of public rejoicing. Though the Princess did not please her husband, she had already won the favour of the populace.

The Prince was in a highly nervous state all day, which increased as the hour of the ceremony drew near. On his way from Carlton House to the Chapel Royal, he said to his chamberlain, Lord Moira, who was sitting opposite to him in the coach, "It is no use, Moira, I shall never love any woman but Fitzherbert." To this the discreet Lord Moira made no reply. The Prince's appearance and conduct in the Chapel Royal were much commented upon. He scarcely looked at his bride, and appeared more like a victim going to the scaffold than a bridegroom to the altar. He was dazed and bewildered, and evidently under the influence of violent emotion. The Duke of Bedford, one of the two unmarried dukes who attended him to the altar, said he was under the influence of brandy. But this could hardly have been the only cause of his agitation, for he repeated the words coherently. If the Prince had

been drinking it was in the hope that he might drown his conscience. Lord Holland comes nearer the truth when he says, "This manifest repugnance to the marriage was attributed by many at the time to remorse at the recollection of a similar ceremony which had passed between him and Mrs Fitzherbert."[1] At one time the remembrance seemed to be too much for the Prince, for he rose from his knees in the midst of a prayer The Archbishop paused: but the King stepped forward and whispered something to his son, the Prince knelt down again and the ceremony proceeded to the close without further interruption.

After the marriage the King and Queen held a drawing-room Then the royal family supped in private, and later the newly-married pair drove to Carlton House. So ended this unhappy day.

The popular enthusiasm was great The whole of London was illuminated, and the church bells were rung all over the kingdom. Even at Richmond, in the seclusion of Marble Hill, some echo

[1] There are endless stories about what took place at the marriage. Lady Maria Stuart wrote that the Prince "looked like death." Wraxall, in his "Memoirs," writes, "that the Duke and Duchess of Dorset, and the Duchess (Isabella) of Rutland, all of whom were present at the ceremony, told him that . . . Dr Moore, then Archbishop of Canterbury, when reading the matrimonial service in the Chapel Royal, gave unequivocal proofs of his apprehension that some engagement of a moral or religious nature antecedently contracted by the Prince might form a bar to the union which he was about to celebrate, for when he came to the words relative to 'either knowing of any impediment,' he laid down the book and looked earnestly for a second or two at the King, as well as at the royal bridegroom. The latter was much affected, and shed tears Not content with this tacit allusion to the report, the Archbishop twice repeated the passage in which the Prince engages to live from that time in nuptial fidelity with his consort"

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of the popular rejoicings reached the ears of Mrs. Fitzherbert. She seems to have cherished a hope that the marriage would not take place, that even at the last hour the Prince would draw back and refuse to perjure himself. "Such implicit confidence and blind credulity did she place in him," says one, "that when Orlando Bridgeman, now Lord Bradford, went to inform Mrs. Fitzherbert of the Prince's marriage, she would not believe it until he swore that he himself had been present at the ceremony, and when he did so, she fainted away."[1]

[1] Bury, *op. cit.*

CHAPTER XVII

THE PRINCE'S WILL

(1796)

For some time after the marriage of the Prince of Wales to Princess Caroline of Brunswick, Mrs. Fitzherbert lived in retirement at Marble Hill. She suffered much in health and spirits; "her heart," she told a friend, "was almost broken." Her position as "wife yet no wife" was a difficult one truly, and had she followed her inclination, she would have continued in seclusion, or have left England for a time. But her retirement from the scene, as her friends and well-wishers reminded her, *would be liable to misinterpretation. Why should* she hide her head as one ashamed? After all she had done no wrong, the wrong had been done to her, and to withdraw altogether from the world would be to play into her enemies' hands, and give colour to the many baseless rumours circulated against her. So, upon reflection, she resolved to act in the same way as she had done after Fox's denial of her marriage in the House of Commons—to make no difference in her mode of life, to go about exactly as if nothing had taken place, and to let people say what they would. But it was easier in 1787 than in 1795; then she had her husband by her side, now she was alone. Nevertheless she braced herself to

the effort, and the summer of the following year (1796) found her once more in London. Her house in Pall Mall had been given up, and in place of it she bought another, at the corner of Tilney Street and Park Lane. The entrance was in Tilney Street, but the house fronted Park Lane, separated from it by a tiny strip of garden. On the ground floor Mrs. Fitzherbert retained three rooms especially for her own use, a boudoir, bedroom, and dressing-room, the windows overlooking the Park.[1] The house was admirably adapted for entertaining, and contained handsome reception rooms. These Mrs. Fitzherbert threw open to her friends, and they were soon filled. Very general sympathy was felt for her, combined with admiration for the quiet courage and dignity with which she bore her troubles. Many of her friends opined that she was well rid of the Prince. Her social position never stood better than in the year which followed the marriage of the Prince of Wales to Princess Caroline, not even in 1787. In one respect it stood higher than then, for though abandoned by the Prince, the royal

[1] This house, No. 6, Tilney Street, Park Lane, continued to be the London residence of Mrs. Fitzherbert for over forty years, from 1796 until her death in 1837. It then passed into the possession of her adopted daughter, the Hon. Mrs. George Dawson Damer, *née* Seymour, who lived there for many years. It afterwards became the property of the third Earl Manvers, and is now occupied by the Dowager Countess Manvers. By the courtesy of Lady Manvers I have seen the rooms that Mrs. Fitzherbert retained for her own use on the ground floor, with the windows fronting Park Lane. Except that the furniture is more modern, the rooms are unchanged from what they were in Mrs. Fitzherbert's day; a solitary relic remains in the shape of a jewel-box with the initials "G.R." In the dining-room there hangs a portrait of George IV. by Sir Thomas Lawrence and one of Mrs. Fitzherbert by Romney. The latter I reproduce in this book by the kind permission of Lord Manvers.

family, including the King and Queen were her friends Lord Stourton gives an authoritative account of this period of Mrs Fitzherbert's life "One of her great friends and advisers, Lady Clermont, supported her on this trying occasion, and counselled her to rise above her feelings and to open her house to the town of London She adopted this advice, much as it cost her to do so, and all the fashionable world, including all the royal dukes, attended her parties Upon this, as upon all occasions, she was principally supported by the Duke of York, with whom, through life, she was always united in the most friendly and confidential relations'[1]

Meanwhile the married life of the Prince and Princess of Wales which had begun badly, was going from bad to worse The Prince started with aversion, the Princess with indifference Toleration and forbearance might have prevented disaster, but these qualities neither of them possessed None the less, for the first few months the Princess honestly tried to do her best to win the Prince's affection Her best, it must be confessed, was not very good, she could not curb the levity of her temperament or the flippancy of her tongue Her father had told her "to observe everything and say nothing,' but though she kept this saying constantly before her, she was always making remarks in public, which were in the very worst of taste A great many of them were about Mrs Fitzherbert, whom she habitually designated as "Fat—fair—forty' She frequently rallied the Prince on this subject, and, full of remorse as he

[1] Langdale, *op cit*

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was for his treatment of Mrs. Fitzherbert, the Princess's clumsy gaiety irritated him almost to madness. A few weeks after the marriage he asked Lord Malmesbury "what he thought of this sort of manners?" and bitterly reproached him for not having warned him about the Princess. Lord Malmesbury punctiliously replied that he had only received instructions from the King to conclude the marriage-treaty, and "such matters as manners" did not come within the scope of his commission. Yet even he began to reproach himself that he had not spoken in time, and to fear the worst. "It is impossible to foresee or conceive any comfort from this connection," he writes, "in which I lament very much having taken any share, however passive it was."[1] The differences between the ill-mated pair were aggravated by Lady Jersey, who deliberately sought in every way to poison the mind of the Prince against the Princess, and to prejudice the Princess still further against her husband. She repeated to the Prince all the indiscreet and unflattering remarks which Caroline was perpetually making about the person and conduct of her husband; on the other hand, she flaunted her *liaison* with the Prince before his wife's eyes. The Princess determined to remove her lady-in-waiting, but she was at first unable to do so, for Lady Jersey had been placed about her by Queen Charlotte. The Queen seems to have used Lady Jersey as a sort of spy to inform her of the shortcomings of her detested daughter-in-law. She threw over Lady Jersey the ægis of

[1] Malmesbury, *op. cit.*

her own respectability; she frequently gave her private audiences, and afterwards set her down to play cards with the princesses, her daughters —a proceeding at least peculiar, for the Queen prided herself on the immaculate virtue of her intimate circle. At last the Princess made a formal complaint to the King. The good old King took his niece's part, and Lady Jersey was removed, despite the jeers of the Queen, who declared it was "all nonsense," and the opposition of the Prince of Wales.

The Prince's sense of injury was increased by the debates in Parliament concerning his debts, and by what he considered to be the treachery of the King and the Government. He said he had been promised, if he married according to his father's wishes, that his debts would be discharged in full, and his income increased. The Duke of Clarence, speaking in the House of Lords, said: "He would not betray anything that passed in private conversation, but it was a matter of public notoriety that, before the marriage took place, it was stipulated that the Prince should, in the event of the union, be disencumbered of his debts." The result was very different. Pitt proposed that the Prince's income should be increased to £125,000 a year, exclusive of the revenues of the Duchy of Cornwall; that all expenses of the marriage should be defrayed, and £20,000 be granted for the additional furnishing of Carlton House. But, on the other hand, he allotted nothing for the payment of the Prince's debts, and proposed that £73,000 per annum should be deducted from the Prince's

income by the Treasury until his debts were paid, thus bringing the Prince's available income down to a modest figure. Against this the Prince protested in vain. Parliament viewed both him and his debts with marked disapproval, and, at last, the Prince had to take what he could get. As the Duke of Clarence expressed it in the House of Lords, "His royal brother was in the situation of a man who, if he cannot get a particular haunch of venison, will take any other haunch rather than go without." But the Prince was not satisfied with his haunch; he again made an ostentatious parade of his poverty; he gave no entertainments; he reduced his household, and sulked both in public and private.

The unfortunate Princess was not to blame for the bad faith of the King and the Government, but it seems to have increased the Prince's resentment against her. His debts were not paid, and he was burdened with a wife whom he detested. Quarrels now became frequent, for the Princess had a high spirit, and was quick to retort. There were faults on both sides, but on the Prince's side the blame was the greater. Still, a semblance of union was kept up between the unhappy pair until the birth of the Princess Charlotte, which took place on January 7, 1796, exactly nine months after the marriage. The Prince was present at the birth, and he behaved with much good feeling. He received with satisfaction the congratulations of the great officers of state, who were in attendance, on the birth of an heiress presumptive to the throne. To the Prince the

birth of this child meant something more than that; it meant his deliverance from an almost insupportable thraldom. In any case, the Prince would have disliked his wife, for they were quite unsuited to one another, but into his dislike there entered an element of physical repulsion which he could not (even if he would) overcome. The Prince had unequalled powers of self-deception; by this time he had persuaded himself that he had married the Princess of Wales, not because he wished to obtain the payment of his debts, but from patriotism and a sense of duty. He had sacrificed his own inclinations in order to provide for the direct succession to the throne. Now that purpose was accomplished, there was no need to continue the sacrifice, and he determined to escape from an intolerable situation without delay. He had been forced into this detested marriage, a victim of political expediency. In his eyes, it was merely a marriage of state, conferring no obligations on him beyond the one he had fulfilled.

The day after the birth of the Princess Charlotte the Prince was seized with one of his sudden and mysterious attacks of illness, brought on, no doubt, by the agitation and excitement consequent on the event. The attack, which was very violent, was treated as usual with profuse bleeding, which left him in a state of extreme weakness. The Prince was, or thought that he was, in danger of his life; and his thoughts flew back to the woman whom he loved more than any one else in the world, the woman whom he still regarded as his wife, Maria Fitzherbert. He was full of remorse for the wrong he had

done her, the sin of it lay heavy on his soul, and his conscience prompted him to make her all possible amends. As soon as he had rallied a little, he drew up the following will in her favour, acknowledging her to be his wife, and leaving her everything he had in the world :—

"*This is my last Will and Testament, written in my own hand, and executed by me, signed and sealed this* 10*th day of January, in the year of Our Lord* 1796.

"George P.



"By this, my last Will and Testament, I now bequeathe, give, and settle at my death all my worldly property of every description, denomination and sort, personal and other, *to my Maria Fitzherbert, my Wife, the Wife of my heart and soul.*[2] Although by the laws of this country she could not avail herself publicly of that name, *still such she is in the eyes of Heaven, was, is, and ever will be such in mine.* And for the truth of which assertion I

[1] This will, the most interesting of the Fitzherbert papers, is the document marked on Langdale's list (*op. cit.* p. 87), "No. 4, Will written by the late King George IV." I am permitted to quote from it the above extracts (all that relates to Mrs. Fitzherbert) by gracious permission of his Majesty the King. This will, written in 1796, was given by the Prince of Wales to Mrs. Fitzherbert in 1799, and was always kept by her in a sealed packet. This packet was endorsed by her, "In case of my death, this packet not to be opened, upon any account whatever, but by the person I shall appoint by my will." In 1833 Mrs. Fitzherbert placed this packet, with other papers, at Coutts's Bank, where it remained until 1905, when it was removed, with the rest, to the private archives at Windsor.

[2] The italics are everywhere those of the Prince.

appeal to that Gracious God Whom I have here invoked to witness this my last disposition of my property, together with such explanations and declarations as are necessary for me to make, to enable me to quit this life with a clear conscience, and even without a sigh, except at the thought of leaving Her (and perhaps too without first receiving the blessing of her forgiveness), *who is my real and true Wife*, and who is dearer to me, even millions of times dearer to me, than that life I am now going to resign.

"As much has been said in the world relative to our separation, I take it upon myself now thus to declare that She (my Maria Fitzherbert) has been most infamously traduced; that her Person, her Heart, and her Mind are, and ever have been, from the first moment I knew her down to the present moment, as spotless, as unblemished, and as perfectly pure as anything can be that is human and mortal. Had it not been for the most infamous and basest of calumnies, my too credulous and susceptible heart, which knew no other feeling in life but for Her, could never have been brought, even for a single instant, to harbour a thought of separating from such Worth; nor was such a suspicion (*O my God, as Thou well knowest!*) voluntarily sought by me. (But as entering further upon this point would involve others whom I pray Heaven to forgive, and lead to more than I am now able to write, I shall bury this in oblivion.)

"As to *Her* (I must, in justice to myself, so far say), I am most confident that had not similar vile, base, and scandalous wretches calumniated me to

Her, and represented me in lights, and in a manner, I here aver, I have never deserved, she never could, or would, have persevered with such apparent cruelty and obduracy so foreign to the generous feelings of her soul, *in rejecting for so* great a length of time, every explanation, every submission, every step my tortured heart frequently tried, and was most ready and anxious, to make, and which finally drove me to despair.

"I now therefore, George Augustus Frederick, Prince of Wales, Duke of Cornwall, &c. &c. &c. do by this my last Will and Testament leave, will, and bequeathe after my death, all my Estates, all my Property, all my Personalities of whatever kind or sort to *my Maria Fitzherbert, who is my wife in the eyes of God, and who is, and ever will be, such in mine. . . .*[1]

"I desire to mention Miss Pigot,[2] who has been so uniformly kind and attentive in her conduct both to *my Maria Fitzherbert* as well as to me that it is quite impossible that we must not both of us feel most tenderly for her. I consequently did all that was in my power whilst I enjoyed life for her, by settling five hundred pounds annually on her during

[1] Here follows a long, detailed description of the Prince's estates, property, and personalities, which included all the money at his bankers', certain land near Carlton House not the property of the Crown, all the furniture and pictures at Carlton House, all the plate, china, wines, books, pictures, "all my rings, trinkets, watches, boxes," all the land in or about the Pavilion at Brighton, all the property and furniture in the Pavilion and in the next house to it, all the horses and carriages, "in short, every article of property that is mine."

[2] Miss Pigot was the elderly lady who had lived with Mrs. Fitzherbert as *dame de compagnie* since her marriage to the Prince of Wales in 1785.



MRS FITZHERBERT

(*From a Painting by* RICHARD COSWAY R.A. *by permission of* Lady BLANCHE HAYGARTH)



MRS FITZHERBERT

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the natural course of my Life. I therefore do not doubt that *my Maria Fitzherbert* will try to make her easy and comfortable, unless she should first, through the interests of my Family, who are all acquainted with Miss Pigot, and with my regard for her, procure her a comfortable maintenance for the rest of her life as one of the Housekeepers in one of the Royal Palaces and which will place her in an easy and respectable independence for the rest of her days.

"My Friend, the Earl of Moira, who I have ever most affectionately *loved*, will I trust not object, as the last testimony of his tried and long experienced regard, to the being my Executor, and to the seeing of this my Will most scrupulously adhered to. And that he together with [Admiral] Payne will guard and protect during their lives for the sake of their departed Friend *my beloved and adored Maria Fitzherbert, my Wife, in short my Second Self.*

"Having now I trust made all the restitution that is in my power to this most excellent Woman, there only remains for me to hope that when she is made acquainted with this entire and free disposition of my Property to Her, of this my candid avowal and of the just tribute *I have paid to her* merit, she will no longer withhold her forgiveness from me, accompanying it with her blessing. I assure her as I now do, that I shall die blessing her, *my only true and real Wife*, with my parting breath, and praying the Almighty and Most Merciful Being, to whom in this paper I have opened the innermost recesses of my heart and of

my soul, to bless, protect, and guard her through this life, looking forward to the moment when our Souls in a better world may again be united, never more to part.

"I desire that I may be buried with as little pomp as possible, and that my constant companion, *the picture of my beloved Wife, my Maria Fitzherbert*, may be interred with me, suspended round my neck by a ribbon as I used to wear it when I lived, *and placed right upon my heart.*[1] I likewise wish and desire of *my adored Maria Fitzherbert* that, whenever she quits this life and is interred, my coffin should be taken up and placed next to hers, wherever she is to be buried. And, if she has no objection, that the two inward sides of the two coffins should be taken out, and the coffins should then be soldered together, as the late King's and Queen's were.[2] It is therefore *my* wish to be buried *not* in my Family Vault, but *anywhere*, as privately as possible, in order that my ashes may repose in quiet, until they are placed next to hers, or united with hers.

"Having thus closed the scene of a life most full of trouble and misery, I have now only to bid a last farewell *to Her who whilst She and I were One* did constitute the sole and only happiness of that life I am now going to resign. None have I enjoyed since we separated, and none would I ever expect to enjoy under any circumstances whatever, unless we were once more to be united. *To Her*

[1] We shall see that this request was literally carried out later.

[2] George II. and Queen Caroline were buried like this in Westminster Abbey.

therefore my Maria, my Wife, my Life, my Soul do I bid my last adieu.

"*Written and signed by me with my own hand.*

"GEORGE P.[1]

"CARLTON HOUSE, *Jany.* 10, 1796"

Two days later the Prince added the following codicil:—

"In looking over the foregoing sheets I perceive I have omitted a circumstance of the utmost importance to my peace and quiet. That is, that in the beginning of the last year or quite at the end of the preceding year, in consequence of an application from me to the King, through Lord Loughborough, that his Majesty would be so gracious (in case of my death before *my Maria Fitzherbert*) as to be pleased to continue to her for her Life the settlement I had for some years, before, made upon Her of *three thousand pounds*

[1] Yet it was of the man who could write this document that Thackeray declared "I know of no sentiment he ever distinctly uttered Documents are published under his name, but people wrote them—private letters, but people spelt them He put a great George P or George R at the bottom of the page and fancied he had written the paper, some bookseller's clerk, some poor author, some *man* did the work; saw to the spelling, cleaned up the slovenly sentences and gave the lax maudlin slipslop a sort of consistency" ("The Four Georges") Fortunately, apart from this document, which was written by the Prince alone, without help, there exist many private letters, published and unpublished, written by him with his own hand, which give the lie to this statement. Many of these letters are admirably written, perfectly correct in spelling and expressed with grace and felicity of diction. Except for a certain redundance of expression he was an admirable letter-writer.

annually during the natural term of my Life, the Chancellor by the gracious command of the King wrote to me, in consequence, that his Majesty did not think such an event likely to happen, but in case that it should be so that he would be answerable for it, which claims my warmest acknowledgments, nor am I acquainted with language sufficiently energetick to express half what I feel to the King for this instance of his paternal and gracious goodness and consideration: if I did I should endeavour to express, though faintly, the gratefulness of my heart. My mind therefore is quite at rest on this circumstance, as I place the fullest and most ample reliance and faith in this, the King's most kind and gracious promise. Lord Loughborough's own letter (of which I received a copy written in Miss Pigot's hand, and which will be found amongst my papers) I gave to Miss Pigot to deliver to *my Maria Fitzherbert*, which I entertain not the slightest doubt but she did. In which event it is in the possession of *my Maria Fitzherbert*. But supposing that she [Miss Pigot] may not have done so, or that it may not have been in her power to do so, then it must be *in her's*. This was a circumstance which escaped my memory, and was of such serious import, and of so essential a nature to my feelings, that I should have deemed myself guilty of the most unpardonable and scandalous neglect, if, upon the revision of all I have here written, I had omitted it, especially as it tells so much for the honour, and is for the interest, of all parties. It also testifies to what I owe in gratitude (and which I

trust my heart has never in any instance been deficient in) to the King as my Father

"GEORGE P



CARLTON HOUSE *Jany 1^o 1796*

"The whole of this Paper is written, signed and sealed by own hand So help me God

"GEORGE P '



The question forces itself upon us Was the Prince sincere when he wrote this will? There is no doubt that he was absolutely sincere He wrote it at a time when he believed himself to be in danger of his life, and to right a wrong he had done to a woman whom he truly loved Men do not lie to themselves at such a time. It was at once his confession and his *apologia*, a human document which reveals the man as he was, weak and emotional maybe, but very far removed from the heartless voluptuary his enemies have depicted him. He did not write it for publication, nor with the object of enticing Mrs Fitzherbert to return to him Not until three and a half years later (when she had already promised to return subject to the sanction of her Church) did the Prince show her this will That he acted deliberately, and not on the impulse of the moment, in making it is shown by the fact that he also made two copies of it—one he gave to the King under his seal, and one to Lord

Moira, whom he had appointed his executor. The original draft he kept himself—it was the one he later gave to Mrs. Fitzherbert. The document gains a special significance from the date on which it was written, three days after the birth of the heiress presumptive to the throne. In the light of subsequent events it would seem to have been the first step the Prince took to escape from a condition of affairs that had become intolerable to him.

The second step was not long in coming. The Princess Charlotte was christened on February 11, 1796, and the Princess of Wales was declared to be convalescent. The Prince of Wales removed from Carlton House to Windsor Castle, and a few weeks later came the inevitable separation. The Princess has herself given the following account of what happened to a friend: "Well, after I lay in —*je vous jure* 'tis true, upon my honour, upon my soul 'tis true—I receive a message through Lord Cholmondeley to tell me I never was to have de great honour of inhabiting de same room wid my husband again. I said: 'Very well, but as my memory was very short, I begged to have dis polite message in writing from him.' I had it, and was free."[1] The letter the Prince wrote to his wife on this occasion has been often quoted, but we repeat it here.

"MADAM,—As Lord Cholmondeley informs me that you wish I would define, in writing, the terms upon which we are to live, I shall endeavour to

[1] Bury, *op. cit.*

explain myself on that head, with as much clearness, and with as much propriety as the nature of the subject will admit Our inclinations are not in our power, nor should either of us be held answerable to the other, because nature has not made us suitable to each other. Tranquil and comfortable society is, however, in our power, let our intercourse, therefore, be restricted to that, and I will distinctly subscribe to the condition which you required through Lady Cholmondeley, that even in the event of any accident happening to my daughter (which I trust Providence in its mercy will avert), I shall not infringe the terms of the restriction by proposing, at any period, a connection of a more particular nature I shall now finally close this disagreeable correspondence, trusting that, as we have completely explained ourselves to each other, the rest of our lives will be passed in uninterrupted tranquillity I am, Madam, with great truth, very sincerely yours,

"GEORGE P.

"WINDSOR CASTLE, *April* 30, 1796"

The Princess waited a week before replying to this letter, and then she wrote in French, agreeing to her husband's terms But she said "the credit of this arrangement belongs to you alone," and she declared that it would be her duty to give "an example of patience and resignation under every trial,' a declaration which was no more fulfilled than her husband's hope that "the rest of our lives may be passed in uninterrupted tranquillity"

The Princess, whose pride was much wounded by this cavalier treatment, first thought of returning to Brunswick to her parents, and then, for she was a woman of many moods, of appealing to the King to bring about a reconciliation. The King did make the attempt, but he found that the Prince disliked his wife too intensely to listen to any proposal on the subject. The Princess could not be expected to understand that she inspired her husband with positive disgust; she did not entertain the same feeling towards him, though she did not like him. She had a quick temper and a ready tongue; she did not mean half what she said; she spoke in haste and repented at leisure, and she thought that the Prince was like her. Though she had agreed to the separation, she could not believe that the estrangement would be permanent. For a time she kept a suite of rooms at Carlton House as a *pied à terre*, but the Prince would not cross the threshold of his palace while she was there, so at last she retired to a villa at Charlton near Blackheath. She was allowed free access to her daughter, and attended the drawing-rooms at St. James's and other court ceremonies. The King treated her with unvarying kindness and respect, and public feeling was wholly on her side; in fact she bid fair to become the idol of the populace. Whenever the Princess appeared in public she was cheered to the echo, and she eagerly welcomed these popular demonstrations in her favour. It was natural for her to do so, but indiscreet, as it added to her husband's dislike an element of jealousy.

So matters continued for two years, and still the Princess did not give up all hope of a reconciliation, the more so as for a long time the Prince had showed unmistakable signs of having wearied of Lady Jersey. The Princess persisted in regarding Lady Jersey as the cause of her troubles, whereas she was only an incident in them The Prince's manner towards his former favourite was cold and distant, and he avoided her upon every possible occasion, indeed he had never been intimate with her since his separation from the Princess of Wales There was no open rupture, for Lady Jersey obstinately refused to take any hint, however broad, of the Prince's desire to be rid of her, he on his part was unwilling, or afraid, to quarrel publicly with her The Prince was much embarrassed by the persistence of the lady, and he employed one of his friends, Edward Jerningham, "The Poet," to give her a strong hint to leave him alone. Edward Jerningham went to see Lady Jersey, whom he found "very artful" He writes —

"Lady Jersey is now in the Transit of Venus. It was very evident her reign was drawing to its Period. I believe I have mentioned this circumstance before, but the singularity attending the progression of this affair is that the Lady will not acknowledge any difference or diminution of regard on *his* side. This embarrasses the Prince exceedingly, as he wishes to let her down gently, and to separate amicably, which he thinks cannot be done if he should dismiss her in form, and unequivocally I have given her intimations and broad suggestions

which she will not understand, or at least does not seem to understand."[1]

Though Lady Jersey refused to admit it, she must have known in her heart that her day was over. The Prince made no secret that he was weary of her. She had appealed wholly to his senses, and his senses were surfeited. The Princess of Wales, who from afar watched every movement of her husband with keen interest, rejoiced greatly at the downfall of her enemy, but she soon discovered that she would not be the gainer. The Prince's heart had long since gone back to the only woman he ever loved, the woman who still regarded herself as his wife, Maria Fitzherbert.

[1] Letter of Mr. Edward Jerningham to the Hon. Lady Jerningham (1798). "Jerningham Letters."

END OF VOL. I

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